

CLOSING ADDRESS*

FIDEL CASTRO RUZ

I WAS TELLING Atilio that I congratulated him on his speech and I wasn't thanking him for his invitation. Distinguished academicians, scientists, representatives and leaders of social organizations, dear guests: I must tell you I have a bitter worry. From what I have been able to hear and from what I have been able to read of the papers presented, I am aware and understand full well that this is an event that has surpassed expectations. A series of earnest, well-meditated works have been presented. I am also familiar with the impressions garnered among many colleagues who have been present or who have followed it in the papers or on television. Also of those who, on Cuban television, saw two round tables this week. One of them devoted to the encounter in Mexico¹, the other to what happened this week here in Havana, and through which millions of people were able to hear the

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¹ This refers to the International Conference "In Defense of Humanity," held in Mexico City on October 24 and 25. Henceforward, all footnotes are editor's notes.

arguments, the opinions of extremely eminent academic personalities and respected and admired leaders of social and political movements, or if you prefer, revolutionaries or quasi-revolutionaries.

Battle of ideas

We are in the habit of not carrying out surveys. We know what surveys are like. The questions are phrased seeking certain answers and they are often carried out in sectors that have specific opinions, for which reason –naturally, one cannot say that this is always the case– opinions are announced that do not correspond to the general case. The method we have been employing, especially when the battle was launched for the return of the child Elián², is that of collecting spontaneous opinions. There has always been a section of our party which collects opinions and a very large number of people cooperate on every subject, in order to orient us properly. This has been done for many years. I was referring rather to what we have been doing for four years, and which is to employ that team to ascertain opinion daily on the most important problems or most outstanding events that occur: an important round table, a major gathering... In sum, that is our habit. The only instruction received by the 17,000 people who cooperate in collecting spontaneous opinions is that from those that are positive opinions (from our point of view they would be the revolutionary opinions), a representative sample must be chosen; and the opinions we call negative –there is a somewhat more subtle term: the opinions that contain critical nuances– must all be written down in the list we receive. This method has been very useful.

On those first days related to the case of the child kidnapped in the United States –I mean the child kidnapped by the United States; the United States kidnaps thousands of children; I refer to the case of that child, for whom we decided to give battle, backed by demonstrations, gatherings, marches, etc.– among the opinions that were collected daily there were a number that were violent, absurd. They said: why isn't a commando unit sent to rescue the child in the United

² Referring to the Cuban child Elián González, who was illegally taken out of Cuba on a boat by his mother Elizabeth Brotons. The boat sank and of the 14 people who attempted to reach United States soil, only three survived, Elián and two adults, who were rescued by two fishermen in waters close to Florida. The child's father, Juan Miguel González, who was unaware of his son's departure from Cuba, immediately requested his repatriation. Elián remained in the United States for over seven months until his return to Cuba was decided.

States? And such opinions appeared repeatedly. They were a minority. And thus, they weren't critical opinions, but were opinions that demonstrated lack of knowledge, disorientation. Think about the idea of a Cuban commando unit disembarking in the United States to look for that child. I was struck by the frequency with which that opinion was found. This struggle of opinions was decisive. We couldn't rescue this child by force. It was evident madness, but it demonstrated the state of opinion of irritated people who stated things without thinking about them. All these issues were discussed every day and often those points of view were useful to me because it was necessary to wait. I was able to observe that those opinions were based on lack of knowledge, lack of experience, lack of information, even a lack of certain criteria. There were times, even, when we collected a series of absurdities. And I read them out at a public event broadcast live to the entire country. I have even been able to see how criteria and opinions evolve. We have experienced a process of deepening of the knowledge and of the consciousness of our population. There is a lack of information here! Here it is necessary to effect a strong criticism of certain points of view because they are erratic!

I am speaking about something that, as I said, began four years ago. It is in December that four years will be marked since that struggle began. This was such a tough, such a bitter case, that it led me to take the decision to demand the child's return. Which couldn't be by force. I said that the child had to return, and this battle was really won through the mobilization of the people; it was won through a battle by international opinion. Since then I have been employing that term, which we now see being repeated ever more frequently: "battle of ideas." Even when, seven months later, the child returned, we had already decided to continue that battle. Because the child could come back and it was stupid to delay it so long. It even gave us time to stage José Martí's anti-imperialist rostrum in front of the United States interests office. During the course of that battle a lot of experience was accumulated and, it goes without saying, the battle of ideas was won.

And it was even won employing these modern media that are so frequently used to confuse the world and to mislead it. This is because there is also a certain competition among large corporations, from the United States and from other countries. We had thought up a form of making some television broadcasts that reached Angola—where a large number of our men had been clustered on that country's southern border, facing the Namibia occupied by the South Africans—through a

station with Soviet technology; and employing I don't know how many towers, we caused some hours of Cuban broadcasting to reach the 55,000 Cubans who were then there. It may seem a bit exaggerated, but there are certain problems that if not looked into entail the almost certain risk of a defeat. The revolution could not run that risk. I must say that, more than an internationalist mission, the revolution was staking its very existence. Imagine what would have happened in circumstances like those, in which we were ready to reach the ultimate consequences, if there had been a major defeat with high casualties. I must add that this always compelled us to carry out a type of war, ever since we launched the revolution, that would entail a minimum number of casualties, for one reason or another. When we were in the mountains, because there were very few of us; and when the revolution was already in power and carrying out an internationalist mission—a duty, as we understood it—we had the responsibility for the destiny of a process and for the fate of a people. Maybe, on hearing this, one gets the idea that we carried out foolhardy actions. No. Because the first action that might be termed foolhardy, and which many described as such, was to launch a revolution starting practically with nothing.

At the moment I was referring to, four years ago, we had even forgotten about it already. One day it occurred to me to think—and this will make you laugh, and with reason—and I asked some colleagues how much a balloon might cost. I was thinking of a balloon that is used in the United States to broadcast television to Cuba. Actually, with a tiny little piece of equipment costing a few cents we have managed to neutralize that arbitrary, illegal action, which violates international norms, of putting a balloon 3,000 feet up for the TV signal to reach our country. And not precisely to teach us English, or to teach us history, geography, science, literature, culture... but to channel toward our country the mountain of lies and calumnies with which the United States' official policy has operated with regard to our country and, from what I see and hear and from what we know, with regard to the rest of the world. One must not forget the monopoly of the mass media which the United States has enjoyed. And our intellectuals have met more than once to discuss the extremely serious problem of the atrocious cultural invasion suffered by the peoples of Latin America and the rest of the world. And which in my judgement and in view of the cultural level that these analyses have reached is an issue that needs to be included. It is an issue to which Ignacio Ramonet, well known to all, has fundamentally devoted his

work. But if it is illegal we intercept it, because there is not only the lie of a political nature but also all the poison from an ethical standpoint, all the exaltation of violence, of consumerism, etc. Because even Internet communications in our country are limited given the lack of an infrastructure that will connect us via international cable. Which limits our possibilities and is a problem needing to be solved. While, over there, in a moment of madness they installed 60 million kilometers of optical fiber under natural gas pipelines, etc., of which around 3 or 4 million are employed. There are 100 billion dollars of optical fiber buried and wasted there.

Major changes have taken place. And new forms of communication gradually appear, but they were not within our reach at that time. We managed to finance a satellite. There were like 5,000 study centers in the United States that listened to these events, these broadcasts, over a span of time. When we managed to air the broadcasts, we provided the signal for free inside and outside, so that 10, 15, 20, 25 international TV networks would come in, and at the ceremony at which we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the blowing up of a Cuban flight in mid-flight, which annihilated our entire champion youth fencing team which in a regional competition had won all the gold medals, at that ceremony at which we remembered the twenty-fifth anniversary of that great terrorist act organized within the United States, by people trained by the United States, and financed by the United States, forty foreign broadcasters reported on it; some broadcast it complete and others broadcast some minutes of it. It was international television networks, including United States broadcasting networks, that made it possible, in certain circumstances because it doesn't always work that way or even remotely like it, but competition has been created.

Suppose there is a demonstration by half a million people –a real half million, because we know how many people there can be. In a square meter there rarely fit more than four people, and squeezed together there may be five. We are in the habit of using underestimates so that many agencies didn't even question the figures when there was a demonstration by thousands of women, or of youths, or of mothers with their children –these are events that every station will surely broadcast. Or the events in Iraq or the resistance in that country. Or things such as happen to some of the very illustrious guests whom we greatly appreciate and who in one case, faced by a question by a TV

station, said, "And why don't you look me up in the United States and interview me there?" Need anything more be said?

Cuba and the United States people

In this way we managed to get the world to know, and more importantly, we managed to get the United States people to know, the truth of what was going on. Among them such atrocious things as the fact that they reconstructed the setting in which that child's tragedy had occurred and they kept interrogating him for eight hours. A six-year-old boy who had undergone the tragedy of a sinking in which he had lost the person he loved the most: his mother. And to me this was a great proof of the virtue of the U.S. people. I have never let myself be carried away by irrational hatreds, or to be blinded. I attempt to analyze things coolly. The precedent had already taken place of the war in Vietnam and of the participation of the people of the United States in ending that war. The protests against the injustice of that war gradually gained ground. Hundreds of thousands of youths who had been sent to that war were undergoing their compulsory draft. It wasn't even a professional army: they were recruits, a similar situation to that of the Nicaraguan process in which the dirty war led them to the defeat of Sandinism by virtue of the fact that soldiers were compelled by law to go and fight and die in that war. In the case of the kidnapped boy there was no war, there were no victims, there were no bodies. What there did exist were facts all related to the child and to the rights of his family. Eighty percent of U.S. public opinion backed the return of the child and it was a decisive factor. Without that support of public opinion the same would have happened as in the case of many others that have been taken illegally.

There are numerous reports about people who are seriously injured or who die as a consequence of a law that we call murderous. The "Cuban Adjustment Act," by which a criminal, someone who kills a tourism worker or a fisherman to travel illegally to the United States, people with criminal records to whom they would never give a visa, by virtue of that law which is already over thirty years old, are recognized as legal immigrants, with full rights –Cubans who set foot on United States soil. In Cuba they award only 2,000 visas, when there is always an enormous demand for visas or number of people attempting to emigrate as there have already emigrated 14 or 15 mil-

lion Mexicans, without counting Central Americans and citizens of all countries, from Haiti, Santo Domingo, even Puerto Rico, supposedly a wealthy colony. The statistics are known of those who have opened the gates wide for Cubans as a result of that law. And they have included murderers, and that has cost who knows how many lives. One can speak of thousands of lives and along that path how often has a father taken the child away from the mother, and how often the mother taken the child from the father completely illegally. The only time we decided to undertake that battle we were committed to undertaking it and winning it. And we won it without the least use of force, without the least resort to violence, only moral force, the force of arguments and condemnation. And there remained in reserve a number of very strong measures of a civil nature. There was no need to employ them, since 80% of the population –which speaks highly of the U.S. people’s virtues– supported the cause! A bad cause demands, in the first place, that the citizenry be tricked. In that they are indeed experts, or have been experts. Historically, over the course of a century or more, history demonstrates it.

What I am saying is a factor to take into account, because I believe that the battle about which I have been talking will have to be won, or will sooner or later be won, with the support of the North American people. It isn’t a question of whether they are powerful or not. I believe that there is something more powerful than weapons: ideas, reason, the morality of a cause. Of course, this is so at each moment in history. But this is the moment in history in which ideas propagate fastest. Much faster than at the time of the French Revolution, when the thinking of the Encyclopedists arrived through pamphlets, and thus Francisco de Miranda, a precursor of independence, and several others drenched themselves in those ideas and had a very large influence. I am not attempting here to present a thesis. Rather, my concern was with having to improvise some words, giving in to the pressures of my friends when I didn’t have the time to prepare and dictate a speech, to read all the points of view and documents presented here. I would have liked to. I have moved around with a stack of papers from one place to the next to try to be well informed. In fact, to go through the documents, things, ideas that we have posed. For this reason I have brought some materials along in case I need them. Really, what I am doing is expressing what my point of view was, posing some ideas, not presenting a thesis. That is the regret I came with and the reason I did not say thank you. Because this is a

very earnest event. Documents, analyses have been presented that will enter history within a limited timespan, and information, criteria, viewpoints have been contributed that have taught us a lot. I intend to continue to learn. That is why I say that what I am trying to do here is to provide some criteria, some points of view, some opinions; to express some feelings with the drawbacks inherent in improvised speeches. Because among other things you know when they start but not when they end. Because one idea triggers another. Because one is in the habit of explaining things. I don't like to say this is so because it's so. I try to explain myself and that is where I run into complications. I didn't want to speak yesterday, but I didn't have any way out. Today I came with the intention of being brief and I maintain it. Don't you be discouraged.

Militarization on a planetary scale

Within what each person thinks, I have the absolute conviction that the U.S. people will play a very important role. The U.S. people aren't our enemy. It is the imperialist system that is our enemy. It is the empire that has emerged from that country –I won't call it nation. It is a bit conventional to use the word "nation." That sum of states, that power that has been attained by what was born from a small group of colonists who came to this hemisphere seeking more religious freedom, which is where, in my judgement, evident ethical principles arise. This power had –yesterday one of the panelists mentioned that it had over a hundred military bases– and of course that little base they have here illegally³. It is the only base that is there against the will of the government, because, supposedly, in Europe, in Asia, in Japan and everywhere, they accept the presence of those bases. From time to time some country, I don't know if it was the Philippines, did not agree with a base over there. Someone also recalled that space has turned into a possession of that great power's. Any place in space. And reference was made here, I think by Prof. Chomsky, to the idea of turning it into a military base and ferrying nuclear weapons there that might be used from space. And ever more bases! There was also talk here of the bases in Latin America. And a few days ago, as news arrived from

³ This refers to the Perry Anderson's speech, collected in this volume, and to the United States base of Guantánamo, at the eastern tip of Cuba. It is believed to be the biggest military base of all those which the United States has outside its territory.

Bolivia in the midst of the most acute phase of the crisis, I read a report that spoke of the United States troops located on the border between Peru and Bolivia, ready to go into action if circumstances required it. The conditions are ready for an intervention. Bases everywhere they are given permission. Military exercises. These large and extremely powerful armies, navies and air forces of Latin America are constantly alongside the armed forces of the United States, are carrying out exercises, along Patagonia, along southern Argentina, along Chile. Every so often they also sell a submarine. And they don't sell aircraft carriers because they have become very expensive and turn out to be almost useless. But they carry out exercises every day. And these exercises –why? Who is going to attack? We have no news that the Martians– not the followers of Martí but the inhabitants of Mars –are readying an expedition that will endanger the independence, the sovereignty of those countries.

Why the maneuvers? Well, it's silly to ask why. One would have to ask why a lot of garbage exists. They aren't even necessary to keep countries dominated. They aren't even necessary for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) or the World Trade Organization (WTO) to exist. They aren't necessary for the existence of the system of domination imposed on the world. They aren't necessary to establish neoli-beral globalization, or fascist neoliberal globalization as one of the clever journalists present wrote. They are training troops for world intervention. That is what they do in the countries of Latin America: train the troops with which they will intervene at any moment. As if we were to engage in joint exercises with the armed forces of the United States! We, who offer to cooperate with the coast guard in any operation! We have proposed it, and no. We have proposed agreements to combat the traffic in immigrants, and no. There is that murderous Cuban Adjustment Act by virtue of which no sooner do they set one foot down there, they already have the right of residence and of employment; it is a great dilemma at this time. On one hand, taking measures, tightening the screws, to impede illegal entry into the United States; and, on the other hand, keeping a law that is applied to only one country in the world, which is Cuba, giving right of entry. But if with fake papers they take a plane in any country and manage to enter the United States they have the right to identify themselves as Cubans and to be working the next day and to reside in the United States! What a contradictory measure! I don't know how they will be able to maintain it. This morning I read a

cable that posed the need to squeeze much tighter against illegal immigration. All the world knows that the number of millions of illegals isn't rightly known. There has been talk of five million, of six; there may be more. They have threatened to expel them. There was talk here, too, of the situation of the immigrants. Someone asked why they weren't given education, why they couldn't go to school, why they did not receive medical services. Those immigrants produce surplus value, and more surplus value than anyone.

And excuse me if I have just used a Marxist term. All of that isn't forbidden. As I always say, we have a large theater here that was called Carlos Marx. This theater continues to be called Carlos Marx. There is a statue that was made by a brilliant Soviet sculptor. A statue of Lenin in a park that is called Lenin. The park continues to be called Lenin and the statue of Lenin hasn't been made to explode with a ton of dynamite. You know that what has become fashionable in many parts of the world is to tear down statues, change the name of all cities. It is a lack of respect for history. If I was called Fidel when I was born nobody would think to say that Juan was born instead of Fidel, that day at that place, the son of that father and that mother. That's because historical events have to be respected in general.

Well, the truth be said: we changed names too. We did it for ideological reasons. There were many sugar centers and they were given the names of people, of heroes of the revolution. Here, many schools bear the names of illustrious personalities. I was born between three large sugar centers that bore the names of big U.S. corporations. One of them even was what was then called the United Fruit Company. In the United States they also change the names of corporations. They associate, build up something new. But, well, one feels shame. I cannot call Petrograd Leningrad. Intellectuals know that Lenin was a great intellectual, a great fighter and one of those who tried hardest, in the midst of his daily work, to investigate imperialism. And he based himself on other authors too, but he was one of the first who used the term "imperialist" in the modern sense of the word. Now there is going to be a need for someone who emulates Lenin and defines this imperialism of today. The new imperialism is an imperialism with different characteristics from that which we could talk about in 1914. With an expansionary power that was already advancing. At that time if there was one principal power it was the land of Blair, a great glory of the civilized, progressive and democratic thinking of our era (one mustn't be slanderous...) Even in the United States

it is known that Roosevelt wasn't very happy with Great Britain. One knows about his discussions with Winston Churchill there in Tehran and other places; it is known that Roosevelt hoped that after the war India and other countries would attain their independence, since they were large markets in which Great Britain's merchandise and products had privileges. They had their contradictions. Until the Second World War, the British empire prevailed; the United States even entered into its isolationism. It is known that Roosevelt was the author of the lengthy struggle to enroll the United States against Nazism. What would Roosevelt have said –Roosevelt, whose personal qualities we know, who was the president of a great power that was then ranked second as a world power alongside the U.S.S.R. too (Germany was still a fearsome military power, and he fought against that power)! And now, if he saw all these things that you have been discussing here, if he had this information... He was a cultivated person, he read, he knew about politics. He faced the worst crisis that capitalism had encountered. I said yesterday that historical events come earlier or come later depending on subjective factors. I am absolutely convinced of it, simply by reading history and observing events. These events and statements made in the name of the United States by the government of the United States, that would have floored Roosevelt. There are, truth be said, more intellectuals who should get down to reading Roosevelt's speeches in the years before the war and the pronouncements of Hitler who spoke of the vital space that it was necessary to conquer there where there were inferior races, in the east, in Russia, in the Ukraine, which were then the Soviet Union. I suggest a comparative study. There are so many things to research, so many things to remember, to compare in order to extract the pertinent conclusions. Roosevelt never imagined a power such as that which today imposes itself on the world, such as is today predominant in the world. Which does not mean that such a power is invincible. It has been said that its technological superiority is fabulous, that this power alone gathers a technology and a wealth greater than that of all the other great powers. Well, there no longer are great powers, there is one great power. Great powers were two equal things, and there no longer is anything equal between the military power of the United States and the current power of Russia. China is a great nation, it is a strong power and it is launching a stage that will lead it to be one of the great nations of the world by virtue of its size, its population, its talent. Because one cannot but recognize that the Chinese are talented –suffice it to know that

the Chinese can read and write... in Chinese. One must recognize they have the right to a Nobel prize.

Imperialism is not invincible

What is it that condemns that power of a military nature –with those hundreds of bases that were being talked about, and independently of the alliance of reactionary forces existing all over the world– to end? Ideas that are just, at the right moment, in the appropriate historical circumstances. As is known, there hasn't been a single empire that was eternal. Hitler at one time spoke of a thousand-year empire. He dreamed of a Germany so powerful that for a thousand years it would be the biggest power in the world. Actually, of the thousand years, there were nine hundred and eighty-eight years left over. If there is someone of those who think that this empire will last a thousand years, by virtue of its fabulous technological, scientific, economic, military power, maybe it won't reach a hundred years. In all certainty that power won't make it to fifty. That power ranges, I sincerely believe, between twenty and fifty years. I don't refer to the U.S. nation, whose destruction or decadence nobody wishes. We desire for the people of that great state the same fate we can wish and should wish for every other people of the entire world. Starting from the premise that this world can be fixed. Without ceasing to be realistic.

What characterizes this moment almost with a precision measured in minutes is that it is a time of change, of a switch in direction in history. And not to establish powers but to establish rights. The peoples of today have, in certain senses, fewer rights than the famous clans that are talked about. Fewer rights than the tribes of Asia, Africa or the Middle East. I don't know the details of this because little is known about the history of this humanity. According to scientists this species is called *Homo sapiens*, rightly or wrongly. Because over the course of history it has demonstrated –if we take last century as a reference, no other conclusion can be arrived at– it was a century filled with absurdities, lacking in wisdom. Let us hope that in this century our species earns itself the title of *Homo sapiens*. Although we have started out very badly. Moreover, another conviction: we are the point in which it is decided if this species survives or perishes. Survives despite the errors, the lack of wisdom that it has suffered. But it is the great things, marvelous things, feelings and values that human talent

has been able to create that encourage the hopes of realistic optimists. Up to this very moment we are moving backwards, but we are already at the point in which widespread –I won't say universal– conscience is being acquired of realities. This minute is transcendental. It is full of queries, of a wish for hope and a wish for solutions. This meeting has demonstrated it and you were expecting what you have been unable to produce and could not have produced: a series of recipes for solutions to problems. But you have achieved a lot. I haven't seen, and I have been at many meetings, such an interesting meeting as this one. Five years ago discussions still hovered around something else. Ten years ago what there was was universal demoralization; never have I seen so many people change their clothes, never have I seen so much opportunism and so much cowardice. Here there has been the courage to condemn; I refer to everyone, also to the courage of those who think differently. One must not be fanatical; we have the duty to be rational, to trust in criteria and points of view.

Democracy

A lot is talked about democracy, and in all frankness I say to you that finding it is very difficult. A needle in a haystack. There isn't a model for democracy; I dissent with the point of view of one of the lecturers. Perhaps in some corner of the world there exists some democratic formula. Somebody mentioned fraternity, equality and liberty, famous watchwords of the French Revolution. None of the three exists if we speak in earnest. There is envious talk of the freedom that was known by the people of the clan. There was no imperialism, there was no colonialism, there was no slavery. They lived freely collecting fruit, hunting, until someone invented a club to seek food. Slavery represented progress because they ceased to eliminate the prisoners taken in wars, because a surplus could already be achieved. It is a theory that must have some truth in it. It would be necessary to analyze other factors: the parasitism that was being launched. One should never try to attach a sole explanation to the problem. Already slavery was considered progress. And now, when a power, by virtue of its wealth and its military power governs the world and imposes its laws, how can it stated that it is the end of history? That already what is being done is what should exist for ever and ever, amen. Unarguably, the history of this humanity, and not because it was said by Karl Marx should one

be opposed to it, is the history of the exploitation of man by man to an ever greater degree. Where does Bill Gates live? Because I assume he does not live inside a computer. Let us assume he lives in New York. There are hundreds of people who live under bridges and cover themselves with newspapers. What is equal between Bill Gates and that man who lives covering himself with newspapers under a bridge?

There are now in the United States several million people who are illiterate, but mainly functional illiterates, who have failed sixth grade, who suffer the consequences of a disastrous educational system. I refer to primary and high-school education, not to university levels. The best professors in the world end up there, the Nobel winners. They have all the research centers they want. From the countries of Latin America they have thousands and thousands of professional people, university people, the best trained people, who have emigrated to the developed countries. To those countries, so democratic and so honest, that haven't spent a cent on them, on training them; and most of them have gone to the United States. And those countries have neither research centers, nor resources; no possibilities. When has a Latin American won a Nobel prize, except in literature? An entire novel emerges from one's head, but research, in addition to a head and to knowledge, requires the means and the resources that allow it to be carried out. How can there be equality within a society in which millions of illiterates and semi-illiterates exist? In this world which now has six billion inhabitants. And someone recalled here that within eight years there will be around 7.2 billion inhabitants in this small planet in a destruction phase. I believe that Evo⁴ spoke yesterday about the existence in Bolivia of a law to privatize water. And water is ever more scarce; it is a statistical fact, the product of scientific research. And water may possibly be one of the causes of military conflict. One need do no more than glance at the map of the Middle East, and see how much water each one has, where it rains, which one has irregular terrain. Now there is talk about the problem of Iraq. Soon the talk will be about the lack of water in Iraq. And on this water depend Syria, the Middle East, Israel, Jordan and Iraq. Well, since some of them have oil, nature gave others water, and I will sell water. There are already water exports in that

4 Evo Morales is president of the federation of coca leaf producers in Chapare, and popular leader of the struggle against neoliberal policies. Over the last four years he has been a congressman for the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia.

region. Of course there are places where oil is cheaper than water. In Venezuela, for example, oil is cheaper than water.

The air is being poisoned too. There is no equality. How is a man who can't read and write to understand the problems of the world –the IMF, the WTO, the Group of Eight, the OECD, the banking system, what is inflation and deflation, what does speculation with the currency mean? I was trying to speak of the millions that are invested in speculation. A generally accepted figure about that speculation refers to 1971, when Nixon unilaterally suppressed gold conversion since the United States was left with 10 billion dollars in gold of the 30 billion it had had at the time of Bretton Woods⁵. Afterwards, in the midst of world chaos and due to the conflicts in the Middle East, one day a group of countries got together and established a limit on oil production. Another phenomenon that cannot be forgotten took place, and it was that oil began to rise in price. In the years 1974/1975 oil reached 35 dollars per barrel. When the revolution won, at world market prices, with a ton of sugar one bought eight tons of oil. Today, as a consequence of neoliberalism, several factors have led to the end of the agreements on basic products. Brazil set itself to producing cane, even to make alcohol when gasoline cost 500 dollars a ton. I remember I was doing the math to know how many dollars they obtained from a hectare of cane. Sugar was still at 10-12 cents a pound and production rose to 20 million tons of sugar; in India the same happened: 20 million tons of sugar. In Mexico the state sectors thought after the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States that they would sell all the sugar they produced and when the moment came to export the sugar they were not allowed to. The fructose industry had already arisen, fructose costing half of what beet sugar costs, and Mexico began to have surplus sugar. What will happen, if it hasn't happened already? I haven't had the time to follow the history of the Mexican sugar sectors. The state had ruined them and therefore they were being privatized. They were told they would have a future under the Agreement, but now they don't buy their sugar and the world price has hit rock bottom. Therefore, what does the state do, those marvelous, super-democratic social systems –one must

5 The Bretton Woods (New Hampshire, United States) agreements were signed in 1944 and established the new rules of the game that were to regulate the operation of the international economy after the Second World War ended. Those agreements also gave rise to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and to the World Bank (WB).

never forget that? (One must not be a slanderer!) They nationalize the plants when they are ruined! They cannot close plants down because there is so much inequality in society that closing five plants could mean strikes and social problems. The remedy arrives, the so-called anti-neoliberalism, the anti-privatization: it is the philosophy of nationalization every time that private industries are ruined. That was the philosophy before this neoliberal globalization: everything that was ruined went over to the state. With which the loss of prestige of the state increased enormously, because in the hands of administrators who stuck their hands into everything it worked even worse. We arrive at the moment in which the Brazilian case took place: the biggest iron company in the world that was profitable, privatized. The phone companies, privatized. Forty billion dollars in corporations that were profitable –they privatized them. They had 70 billion dollars in reserves!

But the IMF exists, and there exists a law that isn't at all democratic. And you know how the IMF lends. There is a clause that with 17% it is decided if there is a loan or not⁶. An extraordinary, super-democratic case, of a country that says yes or no to a Third World country. That business of the so-called First World entails a bit of contempt towards us, and I confess it: those never have problems with IMF loans. But it does occur for a country of the Third World, where there are so many people going hungry, so many sick people lacking medical assistance, so many illiterates, such a scarcity of schools, of food, of employment; in those cases they must indeed argue in order to get a loan. And that's when the conditions, the worst, are imposed on them. But this is not a static phenomenon. When the Cuban revolution won, Latin America owed 5 billion dollars. I was the bird of ill omen because I visited Argentina; in those days I had passed through Brazil; three or four months had passed since the victory of the revolution. In Argentina there was Frondizi. Perón was who decided which candidate won; he wasn't going to propose him but he had become friendly with the workers; in those days there were gold reserves from after the war. We know that history. But the workers had many things they had never had. Some theaters, some clubs. A rich country. Maybe the only bad thing that could have happened to Argentine workers, in the midst of unquestionable benefits, is that

⁶ Loans must be agreed with 85% of the votes of the Board. The United States has 17% of those votes, with which it exerts de facto veto power over the IMF's decisions.

they were left with capitalism. All that oligarchy was humiliated but it was not nationalized; it was not confiscated.

We confiscated. But we were prepared to pay within a prudential, appropriate time. And what we got was a blockade. The country of constitutions and of laws, as is stated, did not wish to discuss an indemnity formula. Credits had already been suspended. Money in reserves there was none. A silly fact: the money had been stolen by a government that enjoyed the support of that great power that embraced and armed it. Ah, because that government, too, was described as democratic. Because every government is called democratic: like Argentina during the disappearances, Chile under Pinochet, Central America, El Salvador, Nicaragua. With none of those countries were ties broken. With none did they cease to trade. With South Africa they not only traded but had large properties there. None did anything save amass money, covet a lot of gold; neither broken relations, nor economic blockades. Not that I am advocating those things, but I am making comparisons. No, it was necessary to blockade Cuba. Cuba had no business in South Africa, no factory, no industry. Cuba fought against the South African fascists. Cuba spilled its blood while all the others maintained ties and business. Cuba doesn't have a screw there. Cuba must be blockaded. And it's not a question of a month or a year. It must be blockaded forty-four years. Nobody should believe that it has been forty-two years. The blockade began on the first day. Credits were cut off. The money in the reserves had already been transferred by the war criminals, who were no better than those who were judged and punished there in Nuremberg. They took the money and founded those organizations that today almost govern more than the government of the United States. It was precisely those people and the descendants of the millionaires that took the country's money.

And for us, the blockade. Well, the dirty war. In the first months after we carried out the land reform the plans for destroying the revolution were launched. It seemed that the same was going to happen as in Guatemala. You know that it was an agrarian reform that led to an intervention of the United States in combination with the moves of some military chiefs. The pretext was that the Guatemalans, they say, had bought a shipload of weapons in Czechoslovakia. I don't know if someone who buys weapons in Czechoslovakia today is invaded. Because today the Czech republic is one of those great puppets, those perfect democracy where if they don't look out there won't

be a Gypsy left because they will exterminate them. They will do to them what the Nazis did to the Jews. Don't believe that the hatred they feel for the Gypsies is any less in those marvelous democracies of Eastern Europe, which are more pro-U.S., which are already members of NATO. It is the reign of justice and progress, the greatest striving ever for the welfare of humanity! Why, they are more imperialist than Aznar, which is saying a lot already! Yes, Aznar, who is going round recruiting youths in Nicaragua, in El Salvador, in the Dominican Republic which is suffering a terrible crisis of fourteen hours without electricity, of entire areas that have been up to three days without power, where the peso has been devalued to 33 pesos per dollar. Nobody talks about that. It seems the euro has carted off all the publicity. And Bolivia –nobody says what is going on there. And the *maquiladoras*, whose fate is well known: Mexicans had the experience of the *maquiladoras*, which the owners are already carting off to China. *Maquiladoras* that don't pay taxes, that take components there to be assembled and although they are paid a bit higher wages than what domestic industry pays, the people massively want to emigrate to the United States. And 500 human beings are dying on the border per year. More than died during the 29 years of the Berlin Wall. About the Berlin Wall the press talks, the world still talks. But about the wall there is between the United States and Mexico, in the territory that was snatched away from that country in an expansionary war –that wall isn't mentioned. There are already 500. I have seen a cable talking about the organizations that exist in the occupied U.S. territory that have organized themselves as groups of hunters, to hunt those who don't die suffocated, run over on the highways, high-speed roads, trying to escape the vigilance.

That phenomenon is also threatening this collective or sole imperialism, whichever way you want to call it. It is a matter of taste. I only see one giving orders and telling the others what they have to do. And the others will in any case be sub-imperialists, vice-imperialists, office assistants of an imperialism. What do they do? The obey orders. It is terrible to obey orders. We have all defended the United Nations, and on principle, although it has committed more than one mistake, because that famous empire has twisted its arm more than once. Now they are going to convince us that there is democracy in the United Nations, and that they are providing an example to the entire world of what democracy is. There, where 80% vote against the blockade because it is already something so contemptible and so disgusting

that nobody defends it. The United States is left with the vote of Israel and of a little island –well, for me there are no big or little islands– of a small state. Three votes. Year after year it was been growing. The scare was so great when the socialist camp fell that we got 56, 57 votes against the blockade. It was a tragedy to see the ambassadors to the United Nations, where they hid themselves, what they did, what they invented, whether they went to the bathroom, because the voting is open. If at the United States the voting were secret as the rules establish, the number of votes there against the proposals of the United States would be multiplied tenfold. One must be bold to vote at the United Nations. Notice that in a secret vote they expelled the United States government from the Human Rights commission. Cuba is always chosen. The country that has submitted most motions in favor of the true rights and interests in favor of peoples is Cuba. It has never abandoned a cause. Of course, that voting is secret. And in secret votes Cuba obtains an uproar. And that secret voting punishes a hypocritical policy of condemning Cuba on human rights. Nobody wants to condemn Cuba.

Terrorism

We have a clear position on terrorism: during the revolution acts of terrorism were never carried out. I mean to say: there never was economic sabotage against cane and that kind of activity. I don't recall in our entire little war, which lasted twenty-five months, the case of a single civilian killed because of that war. Today, defending the fatherland has turned into terrorism. We are opposed to actions that lead to the death of innocent people. We shall never support any action like that. The causes may be understood; we have to analyze and explain them. Circumstances are not alike in all places. In some it is easier to stick to a line. And we stuck to it during the entire war. Never was a prisoner beaten, mistreated, executed. Of course, the policy toward the population and the policy toward the foe were factors that helped us to win the war in a very short time and with a minimum of weapons. First the foes fought to the death, and then there were soldiers who surrendered. They had a certain discipline, they had military training because Batista's soldiers were drilled, and by United States instructors. But then every time they were in a losing battle they did not resist to the last. They knew they would not be executed

after defeat. It is an ethics we have stuck to, and yet, how often have they stated that there is torture in our country! Prove a single case of torture. We offer them what we possess and what we don't possess, we give them everything, if they can prove just one. There is the history of what happened at the Bay of Pigs, an invasion with mercenaries, attacked by United States planes with Cuban markings. A surprise attack. But on August 15 they touched our airfields, our tiny air force. There were more planes than pilots. We committed the foolishness of having the planes all lined up, as the Soviets had when the World War started –technology of Soviet academic discipline. Thank goodness we applied our own criterion in all essential things. But some foolishness did get copied. For us it was a line of conduct in the war. We made laws establishing punishment with severe penalties. In the matters related to the penalties our own criteria have gradually varied, although we never sympathized with capital punishment. But the problem was when our small guerrilla force had the need to apply a severe penalty, and they were very few. The problem resided in seeking, in selecting the people to carry out the execution of the penalty. That was an order that our fighters found repugnant. That is the morality, the ethics, in which we have organized ourselves over the course of 44 years. I would dare to ask whether anyone has heard of a war in which no enemy prisoner has been executed. I don't know if the United States war of independence was so absolutely saintly that they never shot a prisoner. On the basis of what I know of the history of wars, of all wars and everywhere, shooting prisoners almost forms part of a culture. Sometimes they do so en masse; other times they do so individually. I don't know of a single case. But when we were attacked using our own markings, we had many more casualties than the attackers. It was precisely because of the surprise attack and because the fighting took place day and night, without any rest, which gave no time to the invaders to set up a puppet government there, so that in such a democratic manner as they have always acted, they would have invited us as platoons of the different countries of the OAS accompanying, for example, the 40,000 soldiers sent to Santo Domingo at the time of the Dominican rebellion in 1965.

They now come to Latin America to recruit youths to invade Iraq. In 500 years that had never happened. Unheard of. Never did a Spanish gentleman come here to recruit Latin Americans to fight in Morocco, in the Philippines, in any colony! The only case: Spaniards sent a troop of Cubans to the war of independence of the United

States. Entire battalions of mulattos were sent and fought for the independence of the United States. So that if they really brought us freedom in the year 1898, including the sacrifice of paying Spain 150 million dollars for the purchase of Cuba, well, it left us even –Cubans had gone to fight for the independence of the United States. From the logical point of view you know the history well. It isn't my intention to describe it here. But, well, this man comes here to recruit Latin Americans under the command of the Spanish legion, and the part about the group of mercenaries is under the command of the Polish leadership. None other than the country that for 600 years was invaded every ten or twenty years. There the church of the Catholic religion and the Polish nation were united over the course of those years.

And today, there, at the head of that force; under the command of the Spanish legion, the young Latin Americans. It's horrible. What are they doing there? It would have been fairer to send a million dollars to the Dominicans instead of asking for Dominican blood for a war of conquest. Everybody knows what the Cuban position has been. During the other war we were on the Security Council, and we had a critical position⁷. We could not be in agreement with the occupation of Kuwait. That was politically unfair and mistaken. It's as if we now claimed Florida since it was a possession of the colony of Cuba. There were serious political mistakes and we condemned them. Neither did we favor other actions, which in our view were mistaken, undertaken by the Iranian leadership. And with the same morality we condemn a war of conquest to take possession, by military means if necessary, of the reserve of oil that is so essential for this civilization. So essential that it cannot do without it, so essential that it is destroying nature and poisoning the atmosphere. It has been proven and it was known that no such weapons existed. It is known how many children died. A blockade... The blockade against us was tens of years older. Currently, by virtue of a law that was sabotaged as much as possible, the sale of food for cash is authorized to our country. A majority of the Senate with 36 against backed the suspension of the ban on travel to Cuba. It is the United States government that bans travel to Cuba, but all this is being weakened. Will it reach half a century? That blockade against Iraq wasn't as harsh as that against Cuba. At some point it was able to sell fuel.

⁷ Referring to the so-called Gulf War, in 1991, triggered by the occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi troops.

I was explaining that we feel we have the moral standing to condemn this war. Ninety-one percent of Spaniards condemned the war against Iraq. Consider that Spain, rather, had historical relations with the Arabs; consider that the Spanish language has many words that come from Arab! Why this fury? This gentleman has turned into a bootlicker of the United States. Some call him “the Spanish Celestina,” with this business of going around seeking Latin American youths to go there to kill, to back the occupation of Iraq. It should be discussed whether the Celestina should continue. What is the Spanish Celestina up to, recruiting young men to spill their blood in an unjust war of conquest? I’m extremely grateful, but I’d be more grateful if they realized that it is time for Latin American countries not to move around with Spanish-Portuguese baby walkers. They belong to the same honored institution as we do: the Ibero-American Summit. Although we are the only undemocratic country in the hemisphere. They want to question Chávez, but they still grant us the great honor of being the only undemocratic one. But that is what democracy is! Cuba was conquered with twelve horses. Thank goodness they didn’t get as far as India. If Columbus had been right they would have got there with the twelve ponies. First they called us Indians by mistake; then came another one and called us Americans; then came our friends from the north and took that “Americans” bit away from us. The neighbors up north are the Americans everywhere; we aren’t. I would be content if they would call us inhabitants of the planet Earth; ultimately that’s what we will end up being first of all.

Here there has been no talk about ecology and I don’t know what new world you are going to build if the inhabitants of the planet disappear. There is another thing that isn’t mentioned and it is the unequal terms of exchange. It seem that academicians cannot speak of certain things. Today the price of coffee is an infinitesimal fraction of what it was. What our country produces has been replaced through science and technology. Perhaps Latin Americans have contributed to this development. Nobody is going to protest against the development of science, technology, production. But what they produce they sell to us at higher prices and what we produce they buy from us ever more cheaply. Trade agreements: the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is the latest fashionable word; before it was the FTA. And they had created the WTO, which has evolved enormously. It has turned into one of the main sacking instruments. Those who hold 90% of the world’s patents already want to double the number

of years that the patent remains in force. That is the brilliant future that awaits us. Of course it's worth giving one's life for that imperialism, for that democracy!

Venezuela was robbed and I have no problem with saying so: I am a brother of the Bolivarian movement. I am ready to give my life for the Bolivarian movement. Although I respect opinion. Very often one doesn't know or doesn't have all the factors for evaluation available. I recall that in the last forty years in Venezuela, under those super-democratic governments, independently of what they stole, capital flight totaled around 300 billion dollars. You must surely be thinking of today's dollars. But it's the dollars of before, which were worth much more. This car costs 10,000 dollars; the ton of wheat stood at 186. U.S. wheat is not of bad quality. I am not speaking of other wheat that is sold to us. I don't want to give adverse publicity to anyone; at least for the time being I won't speak. Especially about some products from very humanitarian countries that have taken humanitarian aid away from us. It's a miracle we're alive. Humanitarian aid: four million per year over the last four years, on average. Well, one sometimes accepts humanitarian aid out of courtesy. There are other times when one accepts it with real gratitude, even if it is worth one cent. But some European humanitarian assistance, I say in all honesty, can only be received out of courtesy. Because humanitarian aid and hypocrisy are irreconcilable at least in the feelings of a revolutionary. How much did they buy from us? Around 1.5 billion dollars: raw materials, which might be nickel, tobacco; no longer sugar because they had already ruined the country with their subsidies. An elementary calculation of the earnings they can make selling to Cuba for 1.5 billion dollars: I get around 400 million dollars. They sell much more expensively to it, they charge it higher interest. If there is a credit it is much more expensive. All the arts are known on how to earn money; let us call it delicately, so as not to use the word "steal" money, so as not to say "pillaging" of countries. They give us a million dollars (in humanitarian aid) for every 100 million in profit. The blockade also helps there. You buy and pay this amount, or I don't sell it to you. I give you a credit and you pay usurious interest, or I don't give it to you. Many developed countries with those democracies have benefited from the blockade.

I was referring to whether they gave or didn't give. It is we who are giving humanitarian assistance to you. We also demonstrate to you how much we have helped the countries of the Third World. We have 8,000 medical students from countries of Latin America, the Caribbean

and other places. How many of our doctors go to Africa? And where there isn't a medical school, they organize one. And all this is done for free. At our universities there are 15,000 students on scholarships. If you work out how much a study course costs at a U.S. university, especially at a medical school, the result of the cooperation in human value that we can produce is of around 400 or 500 million dollars. Investing in human capital, we can help in very high amounts. It is the aid that this blockaded country provides to the countries of the Third World. This aid is gradually transformed into technological assistance. We have developed a great program for teaching how to read and write over the radio and we have given it to several countries. We have developed other highly important things in educational matters. Our cooperation with the countries of Central America, Haiti... Our country serves 75% of the Haitian population. Cuban physicians have reduced child mortality in the areas where they work in Guatemala from 42 to 6%. We could work out how many tens of thousands of lives were saved. And we would be wrong because we could measure them in hundreds of thousands of lives saved. The number of fellow countrymen who are providing services in the field of health is higher than ever. The country was left with 3,000 doctors of the 6,000 it had when the revolution won. The doors were opened. The neighbors up North wanted to take our doctors away from us. That empire which has moments in which it is tougher and others when it is less tough; it depends on personalities, on different factors. And that's because everything evolves. But everything evolves in favor of greater power, of a greater capacity to cause harm, political evolution, scientific evolution, the disappearance of the other power, in sum. This was over forty years ago. Thousands of doctors weren't ready, when the revolution triumphed, to go up into the mountains, to go to the countryside. That's because it was really necessary to come from a higher class to get a high-school diploma and to study medicine at the only medical school there was. Today the country has 84 medical schools. The moment came when we graduated 80,000 from high school per year and 6,000 medical students graduated. Today our country has at least twenty times as many university graduates as when the revolution won. And we advance in the search of a comprehensive general culture, toward the massification of college education. It is the fate of a generation that we are discussing. How does a man who is in the fourth grade choose between one government program and another? It is evident that what ends up being predominant is a political machinery, money, propaganda. How is one

to explain that democracy can be spoken of when everybody knows that the most important thing in a United States election campaign is money? Everybody knows that the current president had a record amount of campaign money. Everybody knows that the large oil companies had given the largest amount of money they had ever contributed to the election campaign. Everybody knows that despite everything that was written by the Encyclopedists and what the U.S. Constitution says, in the 1800s slavery persisted. One would have to explain what kind of democracy that was. I'd be ready to discuss whether democracy exists in the United States today. It was in 1861, no less, that that bloody war began and slavery formally ended⁸. I would ask what democracy U.S. blacks enjoyed. And today I ask: what democracy is there in the ghettos? I believe that ignorance, in this period more than in any other, is the fundamental instrument of a, let's say, mental order, if not of an economic order or instrument of power. I won't say that in the Roman era education was a fundamental element. One should see how many citizens could read and write. It was a system of domination via force. I ask myself: how can a citizen think in this ill-named civilization? In this world, a trillion dollars are invested in commercial advertising per year. Commercial advertising forms an important part of the GDP. The man of the tribe, of the clan, decided if he could kill a boar or a deer. Not today. Today you are told what meat you have to cook, if it is hog or boar meat. What clothes you must wear. In tribal days people thought, although they knew very little; today people are subjected to levels of advertising that cancel thinking. For what other reasons are a trillion dollars spent on commercial advertising? See what a democratic civilization! See what absolute freedom! The exercise of intelligence is suppressed. Because they can exert dominance through ignorance. We have been talking here about the subject of the FTAA. I have given long speeches about the need to shape consciousness. The battle of ideas, almost everybody is admitting, is a question of shaping consciousness.

⁸ This refers to the U.S. Civil War, 1861-1865, in which the pro-slavery and separatist South was defeated by the Northern states.

Imperialism, the FTAA and Latin America

When military technology is talked about, the great power enjoys an immense superiority. When it arrives, it invades and conquers the territory. But it is unable to administer it. You know that we have been regarded by the United States as a terrorist country. I have met a series of administrators, officials. I have met James Carter, and independently of the points of view that I did not share I must admit he is a man of culture. Bill Clinton is a man of culture. I said that Roosevelt was a statesman. But some others boasted of only having read two books in their life!

Someone mentioned here the pretexts for an invasion of Cuba. Fifteen pretexts had already been drawn up and had been approved. That was what gave rise to the risks of a nuclear war. Among those pretexts was that of seeking the way to reach a passenger plane: they are around there and are easy to find. Because they accused us, on account of the bringing down of a plane, of I don't know how many violations. The number of times they violated our airspace! I don't know what would happen if one sent a plane to fly over Miami, or Washington, or New York and they told it to stop and it didn't. It would be interesting to ask anyone what the United States would do if a Cuban plane did that. It wouldn't last even five minutes. The Torricelli law came, the Helms-Burton law, and the blockade was tightened much more to try to strangle the country. The truth about the United States is seldom known. Accusing the country of being terrorist! Why? Because it felt like it. Consider that thousands of Cubans have died. The plane with young people that they exploded; they killed the entire fencing team. And it was done by someone who was living in Miami. That place is full of terrorists –proven. With regard to the May 20 speech they gave us the order to renounce socialism. There you are. At a commemorative ceremony that gathered millions of real people. Because it is said out there that 20,000 people gathered and it isn't true. I say that in Cuba's smallest township many more people gather than do for the presidential campaigns of many United States candidates who obtain victory. Because those democracies don't draw anyone. Only on the basis of ignorance can that picture be painted. Why don't they carry out a plebiscite? I see it ever more unlikely, because people are already in the know. The fact that 91% are opposed to the plans of the Celestina is already a lot. A very recent fact, I don't remember the exact date: the vast majority of Latin Americans are

learning to discuss what an unjust war is, a measly movie and cheap propaganda. Now there is a movement against the FTAA that is growing with your efforts and those of the forces of the left, but three years ago it wouldn't have been impossible for them to impose the FTAA through a plebiscite and to tell fifty tales regarding the great virtues, the wealth they would have, the employment, the exports index. A hundred billion produced by the *maquiladoras*! What percentage had Mexican components? I believe that 5 or 6% of the components of those exports were Mexican, and only 18% of the components of the other industries that exported to the United States were Mexican. Today the remittances or the money from the remittances that arrive in Mexico from the United States reaches 14 billion dollars. The greatest income in hard currency of an oil-producing country are the remittances. Although oil has maintained its price, which is above 30 and on occasions up to 35 dollars per barrel. And now one knows about the unemployment figure which rises. The number of jobs that are lost each month and each year. The agreements were opposed by some –a minority. Mexicans didn't know what the FTAA was, what the FTA was. And among Mexicans there is a certain level of education, because the revolution built many schools and took a series of very positive steps. It was a true social revolution in its time. Before the Mexican revolution the tremendous poverty led to the explosion of the revolution. Such as Bolivia's poverty leads to today. I remember that when the uprising took place the miners used dynamite and they even defeated the forces of repression⁹. In Cuba the MNR triggered a lot of enthusiasm. I don't want to be presented as an agitator. Nor as a partner. I am not your partner, Evo. I am your brother.

I said at one point that in 1959 Latin America owed 5 billion. Today it owes 750 billion. We fought major battles over this debt business. Here there were a great many meetings of students, of unions, of women, of intellectuals, of political personalities. It is known how much is owed, the problems are known, it is known that happened with Argentina, it is also known that in Brazil the 40 billion dollars produced by the privatizations were lost in six weeks seeking money to maintain the parity between the real and the dollar. They employed certain mechanisms and created a currency with parity. By creating a curren-

9 An allusion to the Bolivian Revolution of April 9, 1952. The alliance between the miners and peasants caused the toppling of oligarchic power and the triumph of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR).

cy with parity this determined the end of the election campaign, with a violent crisis preceded by that of Southeast Asia. There the others injected around 80 billion dollars because that crisis wasn't convenient for them any more. That crisis had been extremely serious and they provided help. But the fact is that everything that was contributed by the privatization lasted barely six weeks. It was just before an election campaign and in such circumstances there are certain criteria. If you owe your political strength to the fact of having annihilated inflation and having placed the currency on a par you would have to be truly someone committed to renounce all interests to proceed to do what should have been done: devalue that currency. The crisis aided the triumph of Lula and of the progressive forces. But in what condition did they leave him the country! Nobody knows it exactly, but some calculations put Brazil's foreign debt at between 250 and 300 billion dollars. As much as all of Latin America owed, and that doesn't count the domestic debt. A social situation that demands an urgent solution. Nobody can ask Lula today to speak of the foreign debt. That was his struggle, but they left him such conditions that it is impossible to talk about the foreign debt there save within specific parameters. Before Lula left the opposition the IMF acted and lent 30 billion dollars and only 5 billion had been used. They left 25 billion. The reserve has the Brazilian government well handcuffed. I won't rush to condemn the Brazilian government. It is too soon. The situation is very difficult. He has the commitment to hunger zero. It is a country that has many resources. I believe it is a country that can do things. One cannot ask it to incinerate itself. This is how I think. One has to take into account the conditions it is in and to give it a bit of time. When we began the revolution there was a lot that we didn't know. Yes: these are always very delicate subjects. I think that in two years' time Brazil will be self-sufficient in fuel. They have found major natural gas fields. The dependence generated by fuel imports is a big bill. I think it is a country that can be self-sufficient even up to 80 or 90%. I would even be laughing at a possible blockade. Self-sufficient in fuel! With an industry that has a certain degree of development, that produced 100 million tons of food, soybeans, beef, etc. They have the food resources. It even manufactures certain equipment. I don't see that this process could fail. Yesterday a cable by a miracle stopped short of saying he was promoting armed struggle! I am not speaking about a rifle, or about a bullet. When I speak about weapons I speak of those that we have. We –without straying from our doctrine of struggle, which must encompass dialectics.

Without straying either, even one minute, from knowledge of the weapons in the possession of the potential invader, of a people brought up in the doctrine of war; all the people know that this country couldn't be dominated –it could be attacked. But to reach the extreme of what they attempted to do in Iraq... we have no wish. They make a mistake and suffer the consequences. I was recently talking to someone and said that however extraordinary they may be, weapons serve for specific types of actions, in specific types of wars, and then afterwards they can put them all away because they won't be of any use. An enormous arsenal of weapons isn't enough. Also necessary is an enormous printing plant producing green bills every day. There is no economy that resists that, and that one least of all. They have already over-abused the privilege of being the issuers of all the currencies in the world, the privilege of storing the money of all the central banks, of storing the money earned by anybody who sells oil. The United States economy has, among other things already mentioned, the privilege of having everything, of having the money of all the countries of the world. Like Japan, which has an amount of treasury bonds in its power. From the economic point of view there appear risks that threaten that economy. There are the fiscal deficits. There are the budget deficits, which this year will surpass 400 billion dollars. There are some surveys that point out that U.S. public opinion is today more worried about economic problems than about the problems of the war itself. Changes are taking place. Criticism appears. Polls appear. One must recognize the great merit of a group of U.S. intellectuals who have been pointing all this out. They are not harming their people; they are fighting a battle for the welfare of the United States people, whose interests have no reason to be divorced from the interests of the rest of humanity.

It is a question of the system. It is the product of a historical evolution, of a social type. Don't forget that all evolutions have acted to the detriment of human beings, of their prerogatives, of their rights, of their freedoms. Today, of their survival. Five thousand years ago, there didn't exist nuclear weapons, there didn't exist the threats or the dangers that Chomsky spoke about; less than sixty years ago, the first nuclear weapon exploded, and since that time this great danger of extermination has existed. But 35 years ago this other deadly danger was unknown: the environment wasn't talked about. It seemed the only danger of extermination could come from a nuclear war. The population of the world has more than doubled since the victory of the

revolution. A researcher complained that there was no African representative at the table. And his complaint was correct. The thing is that for this developed world Africa does not exist. There, 40% of people in fertile age have the AIDS infection. We have doctors there. All of sub-Saharan Africa has 50,000 doctors, mainly white. For the 500 million inhabitants. Not long ago I was at a meeting on racism and was able to find out the facts. Now the United States government, after the war and surely conscious of the terrible impact, remembered there is AIDS in Africa; the proposal was made and 15 billion dollars allocated to fight AIDS. I am exceedingly pleased: if we had made an offer to the United Nations, we would have offered it a number of doctors to fight AIDS. I am going to say something. I must say it. There are missionaries and saints; I won't deny it. But I know what happens in the field of medicine: neither Europe nor the United States together, those countries that are so democratic and developed but so lacking in the values of solidarity, put together a sufficient number of doctors to replace the Cuban doctors who are there, or in Guatemala. They don't put together five hundred doctors. No human capital was created, no values were shaped, no programs were designed to shape people with solidarity, capable of going anywhere, however tough it might be. When the Nicaraguans asked us for a thousand doctors we asked for volunteers. Already in 1979 the conscience of our country had been developing. Thirty thousand came forward; they knew they would have to walk, to ride on horseback. The doctor takes a lot of liking to the families. When a doctor of ours is two years on one of those stints and says goodbye, there are tears on the part of the family and of the doctor. Two thousand were sent. They didn't need more. Months later two or three were murdered, as the did with the alphabetizers. And what happened? A document was received with the signature of 100,000 who offered to go there. Well, that is already the fruit of a consciousness, the fruit of a political culture, of a knowledge of the things that happen in the world, of a given value that has been rooted and of a consciousness that has been shaped. And that happened massively in this country; I don't know if in others it's like that. It is the people who are ready to defend their fatherland. Here the character of the intellectual worker is massified.

Well, I say that the country can recruit hundreds of thousands of technicians and professional people. I am not exaggerating. The West and its democratic industrial societies enjoy abundant financial capital but are ruined as regards human capital. Their mass media

don't work to create a consciousness, they don't work to spread culture and knowledge. One of the most terrible things about this system that I criticize is that in those societies one finds the increasing phenomenon that the human being is superfluous. Germany is the most industrialized country in Europe. There constantly appear new machines that save jobs all over. Cuba isn't Germany. We are conscious of the fact that we campaign against tobacco. We cannot attain such a pure conception as to say we won't sell any more tobacco because it is harmful. It is one of the country's sources of income. But we try to campaign against the temptation to consume any drug, alcohol, even cigars. Nobody bothers to talk about self-esteem, that tremendous force, that need of the human being. Because I said, what can be the self-esteem of an illiterate person, what can be the self-esteem of someone who is jobless? Today whoever loses employment at 45 loses his health, loses his self-esteem. There are people who commit suicide simply because they have the impression they are no longer good for anything. We have managed to reach less than 3% unemployment in Cuba. Technically "full employment." Meanwhile, the U.S. people have high unemployment and no reaction is generated in the face of certain economic advances. What has risen in the United States is the productivity of labor: many fewer people are producing more. But the unemployment rate is not diminishing. The last news I saw was that the request for subsidies had been of 350,000. Between June and September it had grown 7%. No society in which the human being is superfluous can be a fair society, can be a democratic society. They are incompatible things.

I would recommend a study to look into the value of the dollar forty years ago, in purchasing power, and to compare it with the current purchasing power. Then the oligarchy about which President Chávez has spoken takes away a trillion dollars—legitimately obtained and illegitimately obtained, because one must add a judgement factor. There is talk of hot money, there is talk of financial corporations whose business is to make short-term deposits; their business is to multiply money via the interest paid to them for the loan of the deposit; this is called hot money. It must be pointed out that in the face of the imposed economic order, of the IMF's laws, of the increasing chasm between rich and poor despite what has been promised for fifty years to those same poor whose population increases, there is an increase in the power of a million in patents, capital, technology, scientific research centers, and it is reinforced by the institutions. What

money from a Latin American country, be it Mexican or Brazilian or Bolivian or Argentina, can stop devaluing? If it is considered that all accumulated citizen money of any Latin American country, legitimately or illegitimately acquired, is hot money! What they have isn't gold. What they have is paper, with supposed values that change every day. It is devalued, but not on account of the causes by which the dollar or pound sterling are devalued, because of crisis, because of war, although this does not hinder the pillaging. The value of the currency of the rich countries is devalued systematically and, despite this, the accumulation of wealth increases constantly. This occurs this way with billions of inhabitants who live in the world, for other reasons. I have mentioned one: unequal terms of exchange. That is how millions of dollars have left the Third World. Not only do they pay more cheaply for its product; not only do they charge more expensively for their patents: it's that the money, because of a natural law, must depart. Humanity has always had some little problems with currencies. But the alchemists' prodigy of turning paper into gold is one of the most important technological advances attained by the United States.

When the Second World War ended, the United States, which had entered the war because of the Japanese attack, hadn't lost one screw in that war. Europe destroyed, France destroyed, Germany destroyed, the USSR destroyed. Japan destroyed and with the gift of two nuclear bombs dropped unnecessarily. It was an evident act of terror. They could have organized a battlefield in a place where they had a military base and it would have been more than sufficient. It was an act of terror that preceded the Cold War. After seeing a few tanks here and there one understands that it is a great lie to say that what defined the Soviet victory (after committing I don't know how many military mistakes) was the aid it received from the West. When the war began, in fact, Soviet tanks were superior and had a better caliber. The mistrust and the errors of the person leading the Soviet Union are one of those subjective factors of which I am thinking when I say that men's conduct causes the march of events to be held back. When the Soviets, having complied with their commitments, launched the attack through Manchuria, a few days later history heard the news of the launching of those nuclear weapons. The unnecessary launching of those weapons. How many nuclear weapons are there? Even the international organizations pulled weapons from their pockets –it's isn't known where they have them. That non-proliferation program only serves for a few who have the monopoly to have ever more sophisticated weapons and the

others, if they so much as manufacture one, are invaded, unless they are an ally of the United States, as happened in the Middle East in the case of Israel. The data are known. Once I posed a question in Rio de Janeiro criticizing the arguments they offered when they proclaimed NATO's new military doctrine and its right to act outside the borders of Europe in the Euro-Atlantic area. And I asked them if the Latin American countries gathered there were or nor in the Euro-Atlantic area. It was agreed that the question would be answered at a private meeting. The meeting ended and they didn't answer anything. Afterwards there was a dinner; they were already dining. The Italian was there. I was laughing to myself because they hadn't answered and he said to me, "Fidel: the answer is 'no'." As if saying that they are not included. I posed another question in the case of Israel: the solution in their judgement was a military intervention by NATO. They are going to unleash a nuclear war complying with the Euro-Atlantic doctrine against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and they are going to kill Palestinians, Jews and whoever is there. When Korea spoke of a nuclear weapon the world shuddered, and threats were issued against Korea and whoever speaks up.

International unfairness

There is nothing fair about this world. It is unfair, unequal, arbitrary; ours is a subjected and exploited world. On proclaiming on September 20th 2001, that whoever did not back his project for a war against terrorism would be considered a terrorist and be exposed to U.S. attacks, President Bush openly ignored the United Nations' prerogative and, by virtue of the US's military power, took on the role of master and policeman of the world. In a recent speech he gave on the 200th anniversary of the West Point military academy –well known for its major role in United States military history– Mr. George W. Bush spoke fiery words to the nine hundred and ninety-eight graduating cadets. He also spoke there to the United States and to the rest of the world. He said that "if the U.S. waits for threats to fully materialize, it will have waited too long. In the world which has been entered into, he said, the only path to security is the path of action, and his nation would act. US security, he told the cadets, would require the military strength that they would lead. It was a strength, he said, that had to be ready to attack immediately in any dark cor-

ner of the world". Please, let nobody try to turn off the light in this room. "And U.S. security", he added, "would require being ready for preventive attacks when necessary to defend U.S. freedom and U.S. lives". He stated that "terrorist cells had to be discovered in sixty or more countries; ...along with our friends and allies, the U.S. must oppose proliferation and face the regimes that sponsor terrorism as each case dictated. The U.S. would send diplomats wherever necessary, and would send our soldiers wherever necessary; the security of the United States and the peace of the planet would not be left at the mercy of a handful of terrorists, tyrants and madmen". I believe we fall into both categories.

Bush added that "the U.S. would eliminate the dark threat to that country and to the world. Some, were upset by his not being very diplomatic, or being discourteous". Quite some discourtesy! Speaking in terms of good and evil! I am not in agreement! It is, Bush said, "a conflict between good and evil, and the U.S. would call evil by its name; when facing off against evil and anarchic regimes, the U.S. was not creating a problem but solving one, and the U.S. would lead the world in the struggle against the problem". In his speech, there isn't a single mention of the United Nations, nor one phrase referring to peoples' right to security and peace, or to the need for a world ruled by norms and principles. There is only talk of alliances between powers and of war, and war in the name of peace and freedom, words which in his mouth sound mendacious and empty like soap bubbles. What would Roosevelt have said if he had heard a speech like that one? Hitler never made such categorical, such precise threats as these. Sixty or more: the question was, what might "or more" mean? Soon afterwards, the answer came from Washington. One of the Chambers of Congress proposed an agreement that if the International Criminal Tribunal punished some United States serviceman... the United States would attack Holland! I found the answer to the query. "Or more countries" means "all countries other than the United States."

Latin America's hour

I would like to recall what I said on May 1st and then what I said when the high-school year began. And not because it was I who said it, but because it is all I have. And lastly the speech I gave on September 1st on desertification. This subject which I say is a very serious problem.

I also pose the way to teach to read and write with some methods which are already being employed. Not for Cuban children because 100% of Cuban children reach the sixth grade; 99.5% reach the ninth grade. We have located all youths between 17 and 30 years of age who haven't studied or worked for diverse reasons, and who unfortunately are the quarry for crime. And we have them studying, we invite them to study, we give them some economic assistance and this has had a tremendous reception. This began in 2001 and this year (2003) 30,000 entered university. The country has 15,000 social workers, four training schools. The amount of things that can be done with few resources! I am not proposing, look, Evo, organize a revolution there, set up a socialist system, call it that if you like, or you can use the old terminology that spoke of a stage of national liberation. You recall that things were divided into stages. That's because we were very backward, we were very schematic. Don't tell me you are going to solve the stage of absolute ignorance in matters of state and practical economics with academic knowledge. We know extremely brilliant academicians but there are few academicians who can organize a government. Because they become distracted, and are steeped in theory. It's not that they are unable. The only intellectual I know about who was capable of organizing something was Martí. He was an intellectual, a writer, essayist, poet, a genius. He also organized a party and organized a war. An intellectual generally isn't an organizer. Well, theory is important and decisive. I know about the repercussions of what has happened here. It's not that I am simply flattering you. It isn't your merit or ours: it's that consciousness has been maturing, it's that the masses have gradually acquired it, it's that new forms of organization have appeared. There will be a task ahead in the field of defining things. I have said no two revolutions are alike. It would mean diminishing the imagination and intelligence of man to think that two political processes will be the same. Each one will always contribute something, but it is man who must achieve the synthesis. I say that it is not an option. You have no other alternative than to solve the problems, since this situation is unsustainable. We all know history. I know that French revolutionaries, in the name of democracy, imitated Roman institutions. It wasn't known at that time that there was a great struggle between patricians and plebeians and that Julius Caesar was assassinated by the oligarchy.

I was talking about some books I have read. Well, some further remarks, and then it would be better to start wrapping up. I have

abused your patience and apologize deeply. I mean it sincerely. You are knowledgeable people. This is the most interesting meeting of all those in which I have participated in all these years of revolution. We have had the luck to have the knowledge: eminent people came, we all know; eminent U.S. professors have come. I have said some things during my speech. I beg some of those people not to think that I am answering anyone in particular. On the contrary; one must speak expressing what one believes but hasn't the slightest interest in being discourteous or in leaving an impression of discourtesy. I respect each person's thinking. I thank you for the different points of view. We don't gain anything if all those who have the same criterion were to meet here. Here we have many opinions, criteria, nuances. There is a whole current of concern which I have never seen before, of progress, which corresponds to the real fact that the world has reached this point and that the situation demands changes. There are indeed powerful people. Argentina and Brazil are holding discussions with the IMF. Argentina is discussing more than anyone. Two of the most powerful countries at this time are called Argentina and Brazil. They have in their hands the power of the debt of approximately half a trillion dollars. In this they can be more powerful than the IMF, more powerful than the Eight all together. And nobody can raise a dagger to make them pay, to keep the schools without funds, hospitals without funds, unemployment at 18-20%; nobody can raise a dagger.

I don't believe that leaders make history: the subjective factor is influential as a plus or as a minus; they accelerate or delay. Besides, I don't believe in geniuses or in specially gifted people. I have the criterion that society –and our species– are full of geniuses. While here we have extremely brilliant ones, more brilliant than Martí impossible. If all personalities in history are analyzed we shall discover that they have arisen each time a crisis came. Then the leaders appear. Napoleon –who would have heard about him without the French Revolution? In all periods of history these leaders have emerged when a crisis has come. If Evo had been born at the time when the MNR staged that coup, in 1952, nobody would know who Evo is. So everything is relative. Each person interprets things in one way or another. I say that this is the hour of Latin America. It will depend on the people. If Brazil and Argentina wish it –I am not advising it, I am giving an opinion– they could give the IMF orders, because they have the nuclear weapon of half a trillion dollars, the capacity for self-sufficiency in food and in energy, I am saying in all senses, and a level of

trade and cultural development. They can give the IMF orders. The debts have already become so large they are reaching the critical point. The critical point was mentioned when talking about nuclear weapons. And it was said that when “x” amount of enriched uranium of such a quality is put together with another, equal mass of enriched uranium of the same quality, critical mass is achieved. The little point at which chain reaction occurs. The IMF is over if two nations do the same thing. Because the rest will do the same. Yes, that’s how things are. The point is being reached in which this situation is unsustainable. Will the United States economy manage to rouse itself under the current conditions of the world economy, and of the problems of the U.S. itself? I doubt it. It may be able to do so for a short time. But each time, the timespans are shorter. Having solved one little part doesn’t solve anything. There will be ever more hungry people, ever more poverty, ever more discontent, ever more rebellion. And this does not involve weapons. In Argentina nobody fired a shot, and when they froze the money the government fell. They blew a little, that’s all. If one can blow a lot, so much the better. When these circumstances occur, in Bolivia they can no longer employ the methods that were used by the military dictatorships. They tried to do the same to us. How much did that adventure cost them? That kind of Bay of Pigs in Guatemala. I am going to speak of human beings: 200,000 dead. It could have happened to us if they had managed to land and send OAS troops to establish democracy. That would have happened, two and a half years after the revolution. Many revolutionary measures had already been adopted: all ill-gotten gains had already been confiscated, we had adopted a series of laws that had had an enormous impact on the people. In Cuba the immense majority of the people sides with the revolution; it isn’t known how much it would have cost. In Guatemala 200,000 dead, and of these 100,000 have disappeared. How little is spoken of those who monitored that revolutionary movement. The lives, the blood it cost, the suffering of that people. In Guatemala the category of prisoner did not exist. They were dead or had disappeared. They cannot solve it as in Argentina, nor as they did with Pinochet. They no longer can. They can no longer smash civil resistance with tanks and machineguns, massacring thousands of people, murdering, causing disappearances. I won’t discuss whether they were 10,000 or 30,000. Ten thousand is already an inconceivable number –and the way they did it. And what happened in Chile. And what happened in El Salvador. It is known; it has been studied. It seems as if none of this

had happened in the last thirty years. And the pillaging. How can the system that I mentioned, and that produces capital flight in colossal amounts, maintain itself? It is indefensible. Isn't this imperialism? The latter has exhausted all the atrocities it could commit, but that doesn't mean it will disappear tomorrow. What will happen with globalization tomorrow? Will this democracy –which has just received a tremendous moral blow when they forced it to approve the proposal of converting the occupation of Iraq as a function of the United Nations, without any guarantees, nor any promises, and under the leadership of the United States government– be the only thing we can achieve? It was said here by one of the panelists and one who has given one of the speeches with very harsh words for what has happened with the United Nations¹⁰. We shall see what happens. It is no longer the veto right exercised by the great power. It inclines reverently. As regards world public opinion, people in the United States, Spaniards and, I am sure, the majority of Europeans, of Russians –it was the happiest moment of their life when the resolution was approved, that the Russians, copying the doctrine of the government of the United States, had decided to abandon the agreement on the use of space for military purposes. That is the situation. Nobody can sustain this. I start off with that conviction. For a long time now, at many of the meetings we have had here there has been talk of all these things. Stock exchanges rose so high –a phenomenon that hadn't happened even in 1929– that there were stocks of high-technology industries that, in an extremely brief period, rose from one million to 800 million dollars. They rose 800 times. We asked ourselves and searched in books for the various theories on where that money comes from. Many things have been mentioned here, casino economy... I think one must go deeper into all these phenomena. We have the duty to find out what will happen. And we have the duty to defend ourselves against two enormous dangers: one of them of an economic, social and political order, and another of a macro-natural order. I say goodbye to you in the hope that your great-great-grandchildren will be able to arrive at a year 2100 in which intelligence, education and culture prevail over instincts. Up to now, society has done nothing else than cultivate instinct. The better world that everyone talks about must be the fruit of the battle of education, culture, intelligence and the values it has created against the instincts that we inherit from nature. Optimist is the name I give to someone

¹⁰ See the article by Perry Anderson in this same book.

who believes that what the evolution of our species gave us in gray matter will prevail over the biological laws that nature gave us. This, without putting the blame on anyone save us. We thank everybody, principally those who, to participate in this gathering, to which they have given a lot of life with their points of view, had to overcome great obstacles. I won't say, Fatherland or Death. I will say: may humanity be saved.