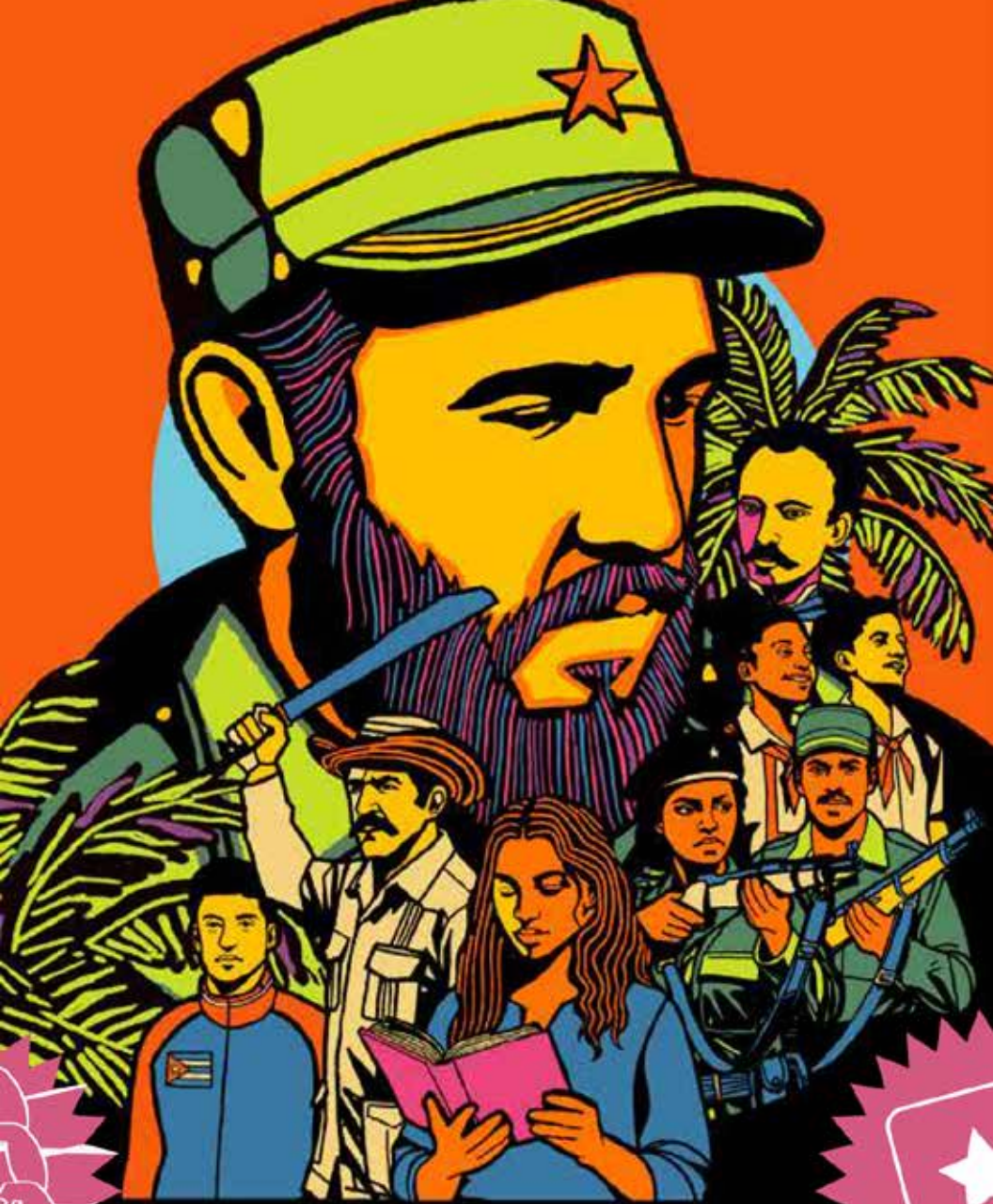




FIDEL CASTRO

**A revolution can only be
child of culture and ideas**



FIDEL CASTRO

*A revolution can only be
child of culture and ideias*

EDITED BY
DR. RENÉ GONZÁLEZ BARRIOS

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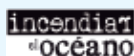
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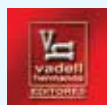
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Editorial Note

In 2026 we celebrate the centenary of Fidel Castro Ruz (1926-2016), one of the most important revolutionary leaders Latin America has had in its history. A human being who – like Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, one of his inspirations – devoted every minute of his life to thinking through and building socialist revolution in his country and in the world. Fidel's legacy remains alive and can be seen above all in the Cuban people and in their daily resistance to the incessant imperialist offensive of the United States.

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 was one of the most important historical landmarks of the second half of the twentieth century and influenced political struggles around the world from that point onward. That victory demonstrated to the world that the possibility of defeating the ruling classes and imperialism was real. On one hand, left-wing movements and parties in various Latin American countries drew inspiration from this example to advance the class struggle; on the other, ruling classes subservient to the imperialist logic allied themselves with the U.S. and organized, financed, and carried out coups d'état, inaugurating dictatorships throughout the continent. The liberation struggles of the colonies on the African continent also drew inspiration from, and counted on the moral, logistical, and military support of, the Cuban Revolution. The strength of the people of this small Caribbean island is feared to this day — it is no accident that the greatest imperialist power continues its incessant attempts to defeat the Cuban Revolution, chiefly through a criminal economic blockade that has remained in force for more than 60 years.

This revolutionary process, although it had Fidel Castro as its central leading figure, was only possible through the formulations,

dedication, and struggle of numerous militants who marched at his side. Not only those who had been present since the group's first political actions in 1953 — such as Abel Santamaría, Haydée Santamaría, Melba Hernández, Raúl Castro — but also others who joined the revolutionary struggle in the mountains and in the cities — such as Ernesto Che Guevara, Celia Sánchez, Camilo Cienfuegos, among others. Even so, this leading guerrilla nucleus would not have succeeded without the fundamental support of the peasants, the urban workers, and the Cuban students.

One of the principal points of reference for the struggle of the Cuban people, and for Fidel, is José Martí, the anti-imperialist intellectual and poet who was central to the struggle for Cuban independence in the late nineteenth century. Among the many lessons of Martí that the Cuban revolutionary absorbed and put into practice, the following stands out: “Trenches of ideas are worth more than trenches of stone”.

Concern for the education and the political and cultural formation of the Cuban people was present throughout Fidel's political praxis; the battle of ideas was a central element across his entire trajectory. Among the many measures taken by the revolutionary government in this regard, we may mention, for example, the founding of the Casa de las Américas in 1959, the creation of the National Press in 1960, and the historic literacy campaign of 1961, which made Cuba, from that point on, a territory free of illiteracy. Also as part of the revolutionary government's cultural policy, it is worth noting the publication of an edition of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, with a print run of 100,000 copies, as part of the revolutionary government's Popular Library, a book that at the time sold for 25 centavos.

Beyond this, the format of public speeches functioned as a dynamic space of communication and political-cultural formation, continually elaborated and reshaped through contact with the debates of the Cuban population itself. His lengthy public addresses were the systematization of theoretical, historical, and socio-economic elements drawn from the lived experience of the grassroots,

which then returned to that grassroots in the form of collective reflection on the revolutionary process and the construction of socialism. Fidel's formulations and reflections in his speeches were always the synthesis of many dialogues and debates across the most diverse forums and spaces, from seminars with specialists, to debates within the Party, to dialogues with the population in the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs).

This methodology of the speech as a synthesis of collective formulation is a characteristic that can also be seen in other leaders of political processes in what was then called the Third World, such as Amílcar Cabral, Thomas Sankara, and Kwame Nkrumah, thus constituting a form of theoretical-political elaboration and reflection within the liberation processes of the peoples of dependent countries. In this way, the trenches of ideas were strengthened, demonstrating in practice what Fidel synthesized: "A revolution can only be the child of culture and of ideas".

The International Union of Left Publishers together with the Fidel Castro Center organized this publication with excerpts from various speeches by Fidel throughout his life to celebrate the centenary of his birth. The various publishers joining this publication work to keep alive this legacy, fundamental to the struggles of the peoples of the Global South in their quest for emancipation and the construction of socialism. We thank the Fidel Castro Center, in the person of its director René González Barrios, who selected and organized the speeches presented in this book.

In a context in which the U.S. imperialist offensive seeks to strangle Cuba's economy, its people, and its revolution, disseminating Fidel's ideas and the policies implemented by the revolution, through this publication, is a form of solidarity. In doing so, we seek to strengthen internationalist bonds in the construction of a society free of class domination.

Miguel Yoshida

June 2026

Education, culture, and ideas: pillars of the cuban revolution

RENÉ GONZÁLEZ BARRIOS*

For Fidel Castro Ruz, Commander-in-Chief and historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, true human freedom was inextricably linked to the strategic and inseparable formula of education-plus-culture. Following Martí's precept that 'being cultured is the only way to be free,' Fidel affirmed that 'Without culture, there can be no freedom.'

In line with this thinking and to achieve the full emancipation of Cubans, he launched literacy campaigns during the war for rebel fighters and peasants; upon the triumph of the Revolution, he converted the army barracks of Fulgencio Batista's tyranny into schools and called on the people to join the literacy campaign that made the island the first country on this continent free of illiteracy.

This selection brings together excerpts from six speeches in which Fidel reflects on the importance of ideas as a weapon of struggle, and the role of education and culture in their consolidation:

January 28, 1960, in which he explains the transformation of barracks into schools;

October 10, 1960, where he argues the importance of historical knowledge in civic education;

* Director of the Fidel Castro Ruz Centre.

April 9, 1961, when, amid the imperialist harassment that led to the mercenary invasion of Playa Girón, he stated, ‘... we do not tell the people: Believe! We tell them: Read!...’;

December 22, 1961, when Cuba was proclaimed a territory free of illiteracy;

on April 30, 1971, in which he highlights the revolution as a work of high aesthetic value; and

February 3, 1999, when, in the Aula Magna of the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas, he affirmed that ‘A Revolution can only be the offspring of culture and ideas.’

The Cuban Revolution has demonstrated throughout its long existence that it is worthy, insofar as the ideas defended by its people are worthy.

We are turning all the fortresses into schools*

Today, as you can imagine, is a very exciting moment for us; it's a pity that it's already noon and the eastern sun is a strong and fierce sun that might be tiring you out a bit.

At least, our desire to speak at length hasn't waned, and the boys are very disciplined. Do you know how to march? Are you obedient? Do you know how to be quiet when you're told to 'be quiet'? Well, let's see if that's true. Let's see if you really have discipline—everyone, including those in the gallery, so you can see it's fair—be quiet, so we can talk for a while, you and us. Because we count on you, and because we have to count on you, and you need to understand these matters of the Revolution well, and you already know how to behave as good citizens, good patriots, and good revolutionaries, we must discuss these issues of the Revolution.

Why we have turned this fortress into a school, why they used to build fortresses instead of schools, and why they couldn't turn the fortresses into schools. Do you know that? Are you sure? Why can we turn this fortress into a school? Who used to defend the governments? The army; that army. Who defends the Revolution today? Where are the fortresses of the Revolution today? Everywhere. Do you see each of those mountains? Each of those mountains is a fortress of the Revolution, so we don't need this building as a fortress.

* Excerpts from a speech delivered at the handover ceremony of the Moncada Barracks, held in Santiago de Cuba on January 28, 1960, 'Year of the Agrarian Reform.' The texts in this book are based on official documentation from the Revolutionary Government's Department of Stenographic Transcripts.

Before, they needed a fortress to defend themselves against the people; and now, when the people are the ones defending the Revolution, we don't need fortresses. Since what we need are schools, that is why we are turning all the fortresses into schools. And so, where thousands of soldiers once lived, with their rifles, their sergeants, their captains, and their generals, now thousands of children will go to work and study with their pencils, their books, their teachers, and their superiors; and so we have an advantage: whereas before many millions were spent on building barracks and fortresses and no money was spent on building schools—because the money was stolen, and what wasn't stolen was spent on things that were often useless, like barracks—well, we are now taking advantage of those millions that were spent on fortresses and using them for schools.

We still don't have enough, even by converting all the fortresses into schools; we still don't have enough, we still have to build many more, but we already have an advantage that the Revolutionary Government can use, because the Revolutionary Government doesn't need fortresses. We have an advantage by converting all the great fortresses of Cuba into schools. Later we will have to continue building large school complexes, and we will also have to continue building thousands of schools in the countryside, because we do not have enough schools. Now, by filling these fortresses with children and books and pencils, the Revolution is stronger, and it will be much more difficult—that is, it will be impossible—to take a republic that has turned its fortresses into schools. No matter how many rifles and machine guns they had here, and no matter how many soldiers they had inside, since they were in the wrong, since they were defending an unjust cause, they could not defend it, and in the end they lost them; in the end, the people took the fortresses.

What they will never be able to take from us again are the schools, so that we can turn them back into fortresses.

Who were the first to fight to turn the fortresses into schools? The mambises: Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Agramonte, Máximo

Gómez, Maceo. Who was one of those whose ideas... ? Ah, you know it's Martí! Martí was the one who cared most about children, the one who cared most about education, and the one who most wanted to turn fortresses into schools.

The fortresses back then weren't the Moncada Barracks; the fortresses back then were the Morro Castle, were El Viso—that is, they were fortresses that were several centuries old—and the mambises, and the patriots: Martí, all the leaders of the Revolution, fought to make those fortresses disappear, which meant... What did those fortresses mean? Oppression. But when the war of independence ended, instead of dismantling the fortresses, they built more fortresses, and so these fortresses appeared in the middle of the cities, to keep the people subjugated by force. That is why they had those fortresses: so that no one could protest against injustice; so that the people could not protest against what was wrong. And when students took to the streets for a patriotic demonstration, to protest against corruption, to protest against theft, to protest against crime, then soldiers would come out of the fortresses and beat the students, or beat the workers, or beat the peasants. You already know what happened to the peasant: they were struck with machetes, because all those soldiers, in addition to rifles, had machetes, and when they went out into the countryside, they beat the peasants. Here, the children of the peasants had no schools, nor did they have teachers, but all the time they saw a pair of rural guards with their machetes and their rifles. And a child had no chance to go to school, but he did have the chance, many times, to see his father come home one day beaten by the rural guard's machetes. Furthermore, to prevent him from protesting, to take away his land—when they had land—there were those soldiers, there were the pairs of rural guards. In other words, what we want you to understand clearly is why there used to be barracks here, why there were so many soldiers, why they had machetes, and why, in the past, it was they who had the machetes, and not the peasants. The peasants were the ones who took the blows. Now, the ones

with the machetes are the peasants, and the ones who are going to get the blows are the counterrevolutionaries if they come here trying to take the peasants' land away.

And that is what you need to know, because you have the opportunity to learn many things that we didn't know, because when we were kids just like you, we went to school, but no, the governments didn't teach us these things. We used to walk by here and see a huge fortress full of guard posts and full of embrasures, all pointing at the people. Because all the embrasures were pointing at the people—they weren't pointing at the sea, they weren't pointing at foreigners. No, they were pointing at the people. All the embrasures were built against the people, to protect the fortresses against the people, and we didn't have a chance before for anyone to explain these things to us, because what we did see was a lot of abuse, but no one told us that was abuse—that is, the politicians, the political leaders, the public figures, didn't talk about it, didn't explain those problems to the children, and the teachers couldn't explain them, because if the teachers explained them, they were fired, they were kicked out, they were mistreated—in other words, public figures didn't speak to the children, the teachers couldn't speak to them, no one could tell the truth, and so the children grew up seeing injustices, but they didn't see things very clearly, because no one explained them properly. You have the opportunity that we didn't have. That's why we're trying to give children everything that we didn't have when we were just like you.

And despite everything, we were able to learn many good things; we were able to learn from many good examples; we were able to learn about Martí's ideas, because Martí, at first, when he began, had many enemies. Today everyone recognizes what Martí did, everyone recognizes his philosophy, everyone recognizes his work, but at first what they did was imprison him, persecute him, exile him, and many attacked him, slandered him, insulted him, and the people and many Cubans didn't know who Martí was, didn't know all his beautiful philosophy, didn't know his teachings.

Today, at last, after many years, all Cubans know Martí, and even the hypocritical politicians no longer spoke ill of Martí; what they did was come to a podium and invoke Martí's name, invoke Martí's ideas—the utterly shameless ones—while, on the one hand, they were stealing and enriching themselves, and doing the exact opposite of what Martí said, on the other hand, they spoke of Martí and invoked Martí's ideas.

And so, little by little, through books, through teachers who could indeed speak of Martí and speak of the history of the past—even though they could not explain present-day matters well—the entire people came to know Martí's ideas, and that is why a patriotic spirit was forged that ultimately made the Revolution's victory possible. That is why we are so interested in children and so interested in schools, because we want to build a future for the people that is even better than this one. Because today there are hundreds of thousands of older people who cannot read or write, there are hundreds of thousands of older people who have not been able to receive an education, and we want everyone to be able to read and write in the future; we want not a single child in the future to fail to learn to read or write; we also want children to learn to work and acquire knowledge that is useful to their country, useful to their parents, and useful to themselves.

And, furthermore, we want children to lead happy lives; we don't just want them to study, but we also want them to play; we don't just want them to be in the classrooms, although being in the classrooms is pleasant, because learning is always pleasant; to know what happened, for example in Cuba, to learn about all the wars of independence, to learn about geography, to learn about rivers, to learn about fish, to learn about trees, to learn about animals, to learn about the stars, to learn about clouds, to learn about all the things we see, that is very interesting, and that is very beautiful, and you have the opportunity to learn in the classrooms, but it is also interesting to know the mountains, to know the rivers; it is also interesting to know the sea, to know the caves, to know

the valleys, to know the landscapes. In other words, you have the opportunity to go for walks, you have the opportunity to have fun, to exercise—and that, too, is part of your education. You have the chance to learn sports.

Do you know how we learned to fight a war? Don't go thinking we learned to fight a war in the Sierra Maestra; we learned to fight a war when we were boys just like you. Do you know how? Do you want me to tell you how? Well, we learned to wage war by playing baseball, playing basketball, playing soccer, playing all kinds of sports, swimming in the sea, swimming in the rivers, and climbing mountains. We learned to wage war in these mountains, because we also studied here in Santiago, and every time they took us on a field trip, well, we always climbed some hill.

We learned to wage war when we were your age, because later it was the same—later it was a matter of who did things better, did things with more practice, with more intelligence, because we had learned it; all of us had learned to wage war, to defeat the enemy, when we were boys just like you.

All of you must play sports; no child should sit around during recess; no child should stop learning to swim or learning to climb hills. In other words, we don't just want you to study from books; we want you to study in the mountains, to study by the rivers. We want your teachers to explain things to you not just in the classroom, but to take you to the fortresses so they can explain history to you, to take you to the places where, for example, the battles of the War of Independence were fought; where Martí died in Dos Ríos, for example, where there is a statue that is a place deeply revered by all Cubans, a very beautiful place, and where we also have a cooperative producing cotton, corn, and other agricultural products so that you can learn about all these things.

Because you've heard of cooperatives, right? Well, you should ask your teachers to take you to visit the cooperatives, so they can explain what cooperatives are; you should ask your teachers to take you to museums, where you'll find letters from Martí and

Maceo, their tents, the weapons they used, and many other interesting things, and you can learn all those history lessons too. And when there's a movie, for example, about history, you tell the teacher to take you to the theatre too, or if not, to bring the history movie to school so you can learn history. And also, the older ones, when there's a book, a novel, about historical topics, well, have them buy those novels for you, and the books—the books the Greeks wrote, the poems about war, and about history—which are very interesting, tell the teachers too to lend them to you, the older kids, once you understand things better, because the age you're at is the best age to study, because at that age you don't forget anything, because if you watch a movie and go home and tell your little brother about it, tell your dad about it, and tell everyone about it.

Isn't it true that when you watch a movie or when someone tells you a story, you retell it later because you remember it? And don't all of you love stories? Well, the stories they tell us are short ones, and we want them to tell them again, because we're not satisfied with very short stories, and there are stories that are long and very interesting, and they're in books, and when you, for example, have some free time at home and don't want to make too much noise in the house, or don't want to disturb your parents who are resting, you can find very nice books with long, interesting stories that you like, and that way you can entertain yourselves for many hours and learn at the same time.

I understand that the Minister of Education is a young comrade, just a little older than schoolchildren, and with whom the comrade Minister of Education—who is a source of pride for the Revolution, one of the youngest ministers of education on the continent, possibly the youngest minister of education on the entire continent— and that's good, because he can't have forgotten many of the things he liked when he was just like you, and the books he liked, and he's organizing the National Library to publish many books, so that poor children—children who don't have money

to buy those books—can get them cheaply, and the books can be made available to you in schools, so you can enjoy yourselves.

I remember that as a boy there were some classmates—and by the way, I don't completely exclude myself from those classmates—who liked to 'skip school.' Do you know what 'skipping school' means? It means that instead of going to class, you go out to play. Instead of playing on Saturday, and instead of playing on Sunday, and studying—because studying is very nice and very interesting—well, we wanted to play sometimes on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday too, and we didn't go to class. That was, of course, very wrong; we did that because we didn't yet understand these things well, and that's why I want you to understand them well. Well, the Minister of Education knows all the things the kids do and used to do, and that's why he's making a great effort to help you—to provide you with books, to build sports fields for you—because, as you remember, you used to have a tiny little school with no playground, and you had nowhere to play. Well, now, when you have recess, you can play on the sports fields we're preparing, and you'll have everything you need to have fun at school, too.

I was telling you that we, many times, didn't have those things; we didn't have sports fields at school, and that's why we used to go play outside of school on school days, but with all the things the Revolution is doing, coming to school is the best thing there is and the most enjoyable thing there is. Don't you think it's wrong to 'play hooky'? Because the child who 'plays hooky' isn't a revolutionary; the child who pretends to be sick to avoid going to school isn't a revolutionary; the child who comes to school, the child who studies, the child who plays sports, the child who reads interesting books, the child who behaves well at home, the child who criticizes others when they misbehave and speaks well of those who behave well—that child is a good comrade and that child is a good revolutionary, and we want you to be good revolutionaries starting now, and you have to be better revolutionaries than we are; you have to know more than we do; you have to be stronger than

we are; and you have to do things better than we did later on, because you're going to have more schools, you're going to have more sports fields, you're going to have more books, you're going to have more teachers, and you're going to learn more than we were able to learn.

We hope that everything we cannot finish, you will finish, and that the things that do not turn out perfectly for us, you will do better. Don't you want to be revolutionaries? Don't you also want to do the same thing we are doing? Well, when you become men, you won't have to go to war, because by then everything in Cuba will be so solid and our Revolution will have advanced so much that they'll leave us alone, but in any case, it's necessary for children to be strong. Why? To defend what we're doing now. Hopefully, you will never have to take up arms tomorrow to fight because some injustice is being committed against our people, but the best way for you to be respected tomorrow, and for our people to be respected tomorrow, is for there to be many revolutionaries, for there to be many patriots, for children to be strong, for children to be educated, for children to be cultured, and for today's children to become magnificent soldiers tomorrow if the homeland needs them to defend itself; but the Revolution is not just about fighting in the mountains; the Revolution is not just about waging war. Even more revolutionary than conquering this fortress in war is turning this fortress into a school, because first and foremost, the priority was to win a battle, since the fortress could not be taken. But we didn't take the fortress on July 26, nor did we take it on January 1.

Do you know when we took the fortress? Today we have taken the fortress; today we have taken this fortress, because today we have turned it into a centre of learning; today we have truly won this battle. And we still have many battles like this to win, because I want you to know that these battles are very beautiful; the most beautiful battles are not the ones fought in the mountains—the most beautiful battles are these, because in those other battles

there were always fallen comrades, there were always wounded comrades, there were always corpses, there was always sadness, there was always mourning; when those battles were won, whereas in these battles we have won today, everything is joy, everyone is happy, there is no mourning, there is no sadness, there are no corpses—what there is, is joy all around.

These battles are truly beautiful, and we would always prefer to win these battles rather than the others. And another thing I'm going to tell you: these battles will be remembered much more than the others, because over time people talk about the others, but they're forgotten; but this battle of having turned this fortress into a school will be a battle that will never be forgotten, because from this school, more children will graduate every day, more educated citizens will emerge every day who will be students of this school. That is to say, there will be more than 2,000 children studying at this school, which used to be a fortress where people were murdered, where they were tortured, where the people were abused, and today is a place where children grow up, where children play, where children study, where children prepare to serve their country and to be good citizens.

I want you to know that there are still many battles of all kinds to be won; perhaps we will have to fight, perhaps someday we will have to fight again to defend the Revolution from its enemies. If we have to fight again, the children can help us; the children will help us, because everyone here—from the children to the elderly—will be soldiers of the Revolution and will do something for the Revolution to defend it, so that they do not take away the schools and turn them into fortresses.

And, besides, we have a lot of work to do; we have many roads to build, many dams, many towns, many factories; we have to plough all the fields; we have to build many beaches, many tourist centres. In other words, we have a huge task ahead of us, and we don't have enough skilled workers to do all these things; that is why our greatest hope lies not in what we are doing today, but in

what you will do tomorrow. We are very keen for you to study so that you can finish the work we are doing today; because we will only be able to do part of it, and you have to do the other part.

We have set in motion the machinery of our country's history*

Comrades of the Congress of Municipal Education Councils:

Let us speak about education. It is significant that the very members of the congress who have gathered here to address these issues of education are also concerned with the problems of defending the Revolution and the homeland. This means one thing: that we are very aware that we must work and struggle in all fields; that every day we become more aware that a revolution is not only creative work, but that a revolution, while it creates, must defend what it creates and must fight at the same time as it creates.

We have gathered here today for a creative endeavour, to fulfil yet another purpose among the many we have set for ourselves; to carry out, perhaps, one of the most beautiful tasks the Revolution is charged with and one of the most deeply felt by our people: the mission of teaching the people, of educating citizens, of giving every single child of our homeland the opportunity to learn, without exception of any kind.

And we confess that, among the works of the Revolution, none is more inspiring or more beautiful than the educational work of the Revolution. It could be said that it is an indispensable pillar for achieving success in all the other things we have set out to do. That is why this congress is so important, and why this day is so important for the Revolution.

* Excerpts of speech delivered at the closing ceremony of the First National Congress of Municipal Education Councils, held in the auditorium of the Workers' Palace on October 10, 1960, the 'Year of Agrarian Reform'.

We are setting out to do something very ambitious, a difficult task that, in reality, will test the capacity of all of us, will test the capacity of our people, since we are setting out to do in one year what others could not or would not do in 58 years. That is to say, in 1961—which we have already designated as the Year of Education—we aim to eradicate illiteracy in our country.

How many times have we heard about this problem? How many times has this topic been written about and discussed? Almost ever since we can remember, each of us has been hearing about the problem of illiteracy, the lack of schools, the lack of teachers, and that the illiteracy rate stands at 40 per cent, or 38 per cent, or 37 per cent.

It is, therefore, a long-standing problem that has caused us all great pain and deep despair, and for which no solutions had been sought, nor had we made much progress. First of all, there was a shortage of 10,000 teachers in rural areas. We understand that the total number of teachers in rural areas was approximately 5,000, and 15,000 were needed. How could the illiteracy rate be reduced if there were not enough teachers for two-thirds of our rural child population? And, furthermore, in the existing schools, in the remaining 5,000 classrooms, school supplies were often lacking, and at times something even more essential: the children who were supposed to go to school lacked clothes and shoes, and even though the school was nearby, they did not go because they simply had no clothes to wear to school.

This is a truth known to all of us. I do not know if the enemies of the Revolution also wish to deny it. And the fact is that the Revolution, in the course of a year, has already created nearly 10,000 classrooms that were needed in the countryside, and the remaining ones will be established this very quarter; therefore, by the beginning of 1961, the 10,000 classrooms that were missing will be established to provide teachers for the entire child population of Cuba.

For now, for those who still harbour such dreams and whom foreign powers have managed to instil with even the slightest sug-

gestion that our country might regress, let this serve as proof of that formidable achievement: having increased the number of classrooms from 5,000 to 15,000 in a single year in our rural areas, and having provided teachers for all of Cuba's rural school-age children—a feat that seemed difficult. And not only that, but teachers are now, fulfilling a promise the government made just five months ago, in the most remote corners of our mountains—places where no one ever dreamed of having a school, small groups of families in isolated valleys where there weren't even roads, and which now have a teacher there.

And it was no easy task, because teacher training colleges were concentrated in the cities. Almost all teachers came from urban areas, and it is not easy for graduates of our schools—who have never known, who have never had the opportunity to know what life is like in the remote mountains; people who have never been separated from their families, young women—to adapt to how difficult it is for them to practice their profession in places where the most basic necessities we are accustomed to are lacking.

In other words, we first had to prepare the personnel so we could send them to the mountains, and the Revolution demonstrated its ability to mobilize the people's resources and gather the necessary personnel to meet educational needs in places where solving the problem seemed very difficult. This is to give you an idea of whether it is possible for our homeland to return to the past.

Because, in reality, we can say with satisfaction that our country has undergone a very broad and profound transformation, that we have set in motion the machinery of our nation's history—a machinery that was difficult to set in motion, that required many new parts, that required many structural changes; but, if it is difficult to set a country's historical machinery in motion moving forward, it is much more difficult to turn that country's historical machinery backward, especially when it comes to a history like ours that has no reverse gear, but quite the opposite: it has pedals with

which one can accelerate, and the Revolutionary Government is in a position and in the right frame of mind to accelerate the march of our country's history!

The enemies of the Revolution, with the full backing of foreign interests—and those foreign interests themselves—have launched an offensive against the Revolution. We must all understand perfectly what a revolutionary process is, and we have sometimes shared some thoughts on this matter. It is a process in stages. The revolutionary struggle against tyranny arises. That struggle had periods of growth and periods of decline; but each new stage surpassed the previous one, and culminated in a crushing victory over the military apparatus of the big interests.

On January 1, the military apparatus of tyranny and imperialism in our country was crushed; the victorious Revolution seized power, and the enemy, thrown off balance, needed time to reorganize and recover from that defeat. The enemy, naturally, would return to the attack. A revolution is a long process—sometimes a very long one—that proceeds in stages. The Revolution is now at the stage where its enemies, regrouped and reorganized, are launching a renewed assault against the Revolution. In other words, the Revolution today faces an offensive by imperialism and reaction, which are on the offensive.

We must all understand the nature of this process in order to grasp it fully. This offensive will continue, growing more intense each day; we will once again enter phases of struggle, but a new victorious phase will also come. That is to say, they are now testing their strength, attacking from different angles, testing their resources, and mobilizing every possible means. They are, of course, no longer facing the nascent revolutionary movement of the first months of the struggle against tyranny; they are no longer facing a group of men. The counterrevolutionary enemy is, of course, not weaker than the tyranny was; the counterrevolutionary enemy is more powerful than the tyranny was. Why? Because it brings together those defeated by the Revolution in the phase of strug-

gle against the military apparatus; it brings together the interests affected by the Revolution, both domestic and foreign; it brings together the resentful; it brings together the worst social scum; it brings together all the depraved, all the corrupt, all the immoral, all the selfish, all the shameless, all the traitors; it brings together all the murderers; it brings together all the torturers; it brings together all the informers; it brings together all the exploiters; it brings together the traitors; and it brings together, moreover, above all—and I say above all because without that the counterrevolution would be absolutely nothing—it brings together, as leaders and as a fundamental force, the powerful interests of Yankee imperialism. And not only that: it brings together the international reaction in Latin America and brings together, against the Cuban Revolution—just as it does against all just revolutions—the colonialist and imperialist reaction of the entire world.

That is why, that is why the counterrevolution is more powerful than the tyranny ever was. But the Revolution, as we were saying, is no longer the small group of the first few months, the fledgling movement, the handful of rifles with which the flag of the Revolution was kept flying for over a year, in those days when it did not occur to anyone to rise up; because it was curious: it did not occur to anyone to rise up; it did not occur to anyone to take up arms; everyone took it for granted that it was impossible to fight against an army. And those of us who began the revolutionary struggle, when the world practically believed that it was absurd, when certain people did not share those warrior's ambitions, and we had to stand alone, absolutely alone, a handful of men. We are, of course, not today what we were then. The Revolution is also much more powerful today than it ever was; the Revolution also has many more weapons today than it ever had, much more experience than it ever had, and much better organization than it ever had. The Revolution does not consist of a handful of men; the Revolution brings together the best, the most honest, and the most patriotic of our people; the Revolution today brings togeth-

er the good of our people, all that is generous in our people, all that is honest in our people, all the selfless citizens of our people, all the men and women with a spirit of struggle and sacrifice, all the men and women with ideals in our people, all the men and women with a revolutionary conscience in our people . And just as the counterrevolution brings together the scum, the gangsters, the cowards, the murderers, the corrupt, the torturers, the exploiters, the mercenaries, the traitors, and the sellouts; the Revolution brings together the best of the homeland, and with the best of the homeland it is prepared to wage as many battles as necessary at every stage of the Revolution.

In other words, a counterrevolution strengthened by the coalescence of powerful foreign interests faces a revolution strengthened by the unity of the people and the solidarity of all the peoples of the world and all the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist governments of the world!

This analysis is essential for us to understand the terms on which the battle of the Revolution will be fought; the terms on which the forces have grown; and the forces each side has at its disposal. And so, the dregs are mobilizing. Which dregs? The scum of 50 years of the republic: the former military of the tyranny, tens of thousands of former members of the armed forces of the tyranny; tens of thousands, veritable plagues of political hacks who lost their livelihood with the triumph of the Revolution; plagues of scoundrels, thugs, gambling exploiters, merchants of the worst kind, those who trafficked...

A good portion. That is to say, everyone will come to know what elements make up the revolutionary forces and what elements make up the counterrevolutionary forces. That is to say, here everyone will know their enemy, and will know them perfectly well, by their tracks, by many characteristics, by their past life, their past profession, and their present deeds.

We were saying that this whole plague of political hacks, merchants, profiteers, exploiters, and plunderers of the people is the

human material that imperialism relies on, because this battle against the Cuban Revolution is not, of course, led by national elements. The battle against the Cuban Revolution is today led directly by imperialism; the battle against the Cuban Revolution is led by the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, and the warmongering U.S. Pentagon. They are also mobilizing all economic resources—vast, fabulous economic resources.

We must realize that this is what we are up against; we must know that imperialism has at its disposal here all the dregs of the past, that this is its human material, that this is its instrument; that it uses its vast resources for this purpose; that it uses all the contacts it has been establishing here for 50 years; that it uses the men it has forged in its universities, often through its propaganda, whom it has molded to its liking. Imperialism—which is well-versed in counterrevolutionary matters, because it has carried them out in other countries, because it has applied its tactics to other countries—is confronting, or fighting against, our Revolution today by mobilizing all those resources and means at its disposal. That is where the terrorists come from, that is where the insurgents come from, that is where the landings come from.

At first, no one could quite figure out what sense it made to welcome Masferrer's 'Tigers' there, to welcome the worst murderers of every stripe there. And it is quite possible that very few remain who do not understand why. They had welcomed them there for that very purpose: to build up their 'stock' of mercenaries, their reserves of criminals, to be deployed at the opportune moment. But, even though imperialism is skilled in counterrevolutions, even though imperialism has carried out many counterrevolutions, even though imperialism has carried out many international manoeuvres; imperialism is facing a difficult case, imperialism is facing a difficult people, imperialism is facing a difficult revolution.

We are already learning. The Revolution is a great teacher, a formidable teacher, because it teaches us so much; and that word, the word 'revolution,' which for many initially had a vague and

general meaning, is now filling the minds of all of us with a series of ideas and concepts that allow us to truly understand what a revolution is. A word we had heard mentioned many times; an event we had read about in the history of other peoples, but which we had always viewed from a distance, which it was not possible to understand as a people who are the actors of a revolution can understand it, as our people are today.

And as we learn and come to understand things better, we can say—because we have been learning quickly—that imperialism faces a very difficult problem, one of the toughest battles it has ever fought. We must begin by understanding and grasping the exact terms of the problem so as not to deceive ourselves, so as not to fail; we must see things clearly. That is our task. Our task will never be—or rather, our policy will never be—the ostrich policy, no. Let the ostrich policy remain the policy of imperialism, we will not bury our heads in the sand so as not to see; we will lift our heads to see, and to see very clearly, to understand perfectly what we must understand, and to explain to the people, to help the people understand, together with us, the essence of the revolutionary problem. New struggles will therefore come.

We have converted all the great fortresses, not to mention the countless squadron barracks, into schools. 10,000 teaching positions have been created; teachers have been sent to the farthest corners of the mountains; 150 schools are currently being built, each with seven classrooms; facilities have been built for 4,500 university scholarship recipients; the National Printing Press has been established, capable of producing 150,000 books every 48 hours; and book sales records have been set that can be considered world records, such as that of *The Shark and the Sardine*, which sold 174,000 copies in a week. The number of books being made available to the people at prices never before imagined is fabulous; all kinds of books are being published.

Our people may, within a few years, become one of the most educated peoples in the world—a people who study, a people who

learn to think—because what we want is not to instil an idea in anyone, but for each person to discover the truth on their own, just as we have all been discovering it. What we want to give the people are the tools that will allow them to form their own ideas about the truths of society and the truths of the world. That is to say, we want our people to learn to think, and that is why we are going to print millions of books every year, which will complement the work of education, since the young people you teach will each be able to have a library in their home for a very modest sum.

And of course, that is something: that in just over a year, fortresses and many barracks have been converted into schools; that a national printing press has been established, capable of printing millions of books sold for 20, 25, and 30 cents; that hundreds of school centres are being built; that 10,000 classrooms have been established; that a major educational reform has been carried out; that a basic secondary school is to be established in every municipality; that numerous technical schools are to be created—that is something. At least something that in 50 years, in 58 years, had not been done and that the Revolution has done in just over a year. There are the facts.

No matter how much it pains the enemies of the Revolution, it will be very difficult to burn the books we are printing; it will be very difficult to destroy the National Printing Press so they can resume publishing *La Marina* and all those sensationalist, mercenary newspapers; it will be very difficult to destroy the schools we are building; it will be very difficult to turn those schools back into strongholds; it will be very difficult to brutalize the men and children we are teaching; it will be very difficult to eliminate the 10,000 classrooms we have created; it will be very difficult to take away from the guajiros, up there in their mountains, the teachers we have sent them, to send them a lottery ticket seller, to send them a dice player, to send them just any exploiter; it will be very difficult to take away the guajiros' land, to force them to pay rent again, to force them to pay 20 per cent or 30 per cent of their har-

vest; to take away, moreover, a portion of their price at the market; to destroy their cooperatives, to destroy their villages; to return to the electric trust and the telephone trust, or to the oil trust, the factories and refineries that the country has nationalized. Very difficult! That is very difficult, so difficult that it is impossible, because that is one of the few truly impossible things in the world: to make a people who have advanced as our people have advanced take a step backward.

It's going to be very difficult to take away the fishermen's little boats again, and take away the tenants' homes, and take away the peasants' land, and take away the people's beaches. In other words, it's going to be very difficult; we have to admit that all of that is going to be very difficult, but very difficult.

That is what we have achieved in education. It is something, but we still have a long way to go. We must achieve our greatest accomplishment next year. Why can we set out to end illiteracy next year? Because we have many thousands more teachers working; because we have the National Printing Office; because we are better organized. We could not have aspired to that last year without the National Printing Office. We didn't even have a place to print the primers, and we didn't have the teachers. Now we do. Now we must set out to win the battle against illiteracy in one year. They say it's very difficult, but we don't believe that; we believe we can achieve it. How? By everyone becoming a teacher—everyone who can read and write.

We all have to teach someone—every single one of us! Are we all teachers? No. But they show us how to use a primer and how to teach reading and writing, and we teach anyone. I dare to teach someone to read and write .

So, each of us becoming a teacher, with a primer, and keeping a record—to be filed away—of the people we've taught to read and write... Now, that work must be centralized with you, in the municipal education councils. Today the congress closes; you will go home very happy, but remember that next year you will have

to give an account of what you have done in the Year of Education. What must we do? Go back to the people and bring together everyone who wants to help with the plan: the labor unions, the peasant associations, the cultural institutions, anyone who wants to—even a large landowner whose land was taken by the Revolution, if he wants to help, tell him yes, let him come, that we accept him doing something useful for the people. If there is one out there, if there is one.

But, well, I want to tell you that you are going; all the professional organizations, centred around the core of teachers and educators, the unions, peasant associations, professional groups, cultural institutions, revolutionary organizations, municipal organizations, the women's federation, young rebels; in short, all the institutions around the education council, to carry out the task in the municipality. In some municipalities it is more difficult than in others, but we can help those municipalities and we can provide support.

We must also mobilize the students—junior high school students, teacher training students, college students; we must mobilize everyone who can read and write, and each person has a battle to fight in the municipality. And if any municipality is left with illiterate people, you will be held responsible—those of you on the Education Board of each municipality. And for now, we're going to see which municipality achieves the most. You know that once a person has learned to read and write, if they write a letter in their own handwriting to an office of the Ministry of Education that we're going to set up, they'll be sent a book as a gift, as a prize. That book on the history and geography of Cuba, and some basics of world history and geography, well explained in a simple way that any man or woman of the people can understand.

Don't lose heart: we must make education a virtue and ignorance a vice; we must make everyone who cannot read or write feel ashamed of their illiteracy, especially now that we are going to give everyone the opportunity to learn. And let illiteracy be one of

the most reprehensible, saddest, and most painful vices and flaws. Because as long as there are citizens who cannot read or write, and who are so content with their ignorance, there will always be difficulties. But we must create a revolutionary consciousness, and we must instil in every citizen the awareness that not knowing how to read or write is a disgrace, and that those who cannot read or write will have to walk with their heads bowed, because they will be victims of one of the most despicable flaws. We must create that awareness so that no one remains unable to read or write. It is a crime that the wealth accumulated by humanity through its greatest intellects should be lost to millions of people—to more than a million, nearly two million Cubans—that all that immense wealth of culture accumulated by man throughout history should be lost. Anyone who can read and write and has a library at home possesses a treasure, and can consider themselves far happier than those who accumulate not treasures of truth or treasures of intelligence, but treasures of money, treasures of selfish wealth. Every person has that opportunity within their grasp.

Let us turn ignorance into a vice. Let us turn ignorance—that is, the concept of ignorance—into a defect and a disgrace for every citizen, so that not a single person remains who is not interested in learning to read and write, whether young or old, whether 12 or 80 years old. If they cannot read or write, we must have patience to teach them to read and write.

The point is that by next year, on December 31 of next year, there must not be a single illiterate person left in Cuba. You have that responsibility. So you already have work for the remainder of this year and for the entire coming year. Mobilize, organize, gather everyone who can help you, and let's carry out that great crusade.

The ministry is already preparing the primers and the plans to train teachers—that is, the instructions so that anyone can use that literacy primer.

I just want to know if you believe that in 1961 we can win the great battle for culture. And if you commit yourselves, if you com-

mit yourselves to carrying out that task. Well, the entire people of Cuba are witnesses to the promise you have made.

All that remains for me to say is that you are the great army of education in our country, and that a great battle lies ahead of you. We wish you success in waging it; count us among those who are ready to work in that campaign; the people of Cuba will know how to reward the teachers for what they are doing today for the people.

And a tribute to the Father of the Nation, to Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, to whom the teachers have paid the highest tribute today!

We do not tell the people: Believe! We tell them: Read!*

There is much to say about this issue of the Revolution and Education; the question is where to begin.

The issue can be analysed from two perspectives: the theoretical and the practical. Of course, a revolution cannot be conceived without education. Precisely because the revolution is a complete, profound change in the life of a country, in all its aspects, the first major problem of the Revolution is how to combat and overcome the influence of old ideas, old traditions, and old prejudices, and how the ideas of the Revolution gain ground and become matters of common knowledge and clear understanding for the entire people.

This problem of education is not only the education of the illiterate or of those who have not had the opportunity to attend institutions of higher learning, but it is also, above all, a problem of educating the masses of the Revolution themselves.

For example, there were many issues we did not understand before because we did not even have access to the subject; that is to say, there were many topics that could not even be touched upon here, and there were certain kinds of fictitious ‘truths’—which had already attained the status of dogmas in our country—that could not even be questioned.

The Revolution began by calling into question all those dogmas and all those conventional truths—not conventional, but fictitious truths, false truths that, therefore, could not be truths; let’s

* Excerpts of speech at the closing of the 6th Cycle of Lectures of the People’s University, ‘Education and Revolution,’ Havana, April 9, 1961, ‘Year of Education’.

call them lies, true lies—which, nevertheless, held the status of truth for many people, for hundreds of thousands of people.

The Revolution began with a review of all those lies. Any citizen could ask themselves today what they knew before January 1st and what they know today; any citizen could ask themselves what they understood before January 1st and what they understand today, and would conclude that they have unquestionably learned a great deal in these past two years. Above all, because in a Revolution one learns at a rapid pace. If any of us, those of us who have borne greater responsibility in the process of the Revolution, were to ask ourselves how much we have learned in these past two years, we too would realize that we know more today than we did then.

We didn't exactly believe we knew everything—far from it—but we had already gained experience in another aspect of the struggle. When the armed struggle began—during which we could, month by month, compare the experience we were gaining in the course of the struggle—we actually saw that when we began that armed struggle, practically none of us had any knowledge of the subject; yet, in the course of the struggle, we acquired a great deal of experience, until eventually we were able to handle any situation perfectly.

As for the government, the same thing happened: our experience today in solving many problems is incomparably greater than it was in the early days; but we knew that, and that was the most important thing: we knew that we didn't know. And I remember that one of the first things I said in those early days of January was that we were just like when we had disembarked from the *Granma*—that is, we didn't know much, but we were full of good will, of sincere desires to fulfil our task and our duty well. Because, after all, there is no university degree program in the subject of government. You study at the university: medicine, engineering, architecture... It never occurred to anyone, for example, to have a child operated on by a first-year medical student, much less a high school student. Everyone prefers to go see a qualified, experienced,

competent doctor and entrusts their health—or the health of their family members—to that doctor.

But when it comes to government, which is such a complex, difficult matter, there is no such degree program, and often a country's government falls into the hands of people who lack knowledge, or who lack experience, or who are mere apprentices. And, in general, here the government was often in the hands not of people who acted in good faith, nor who had honest and sincere intentions to work, but fundamentally in the hands of skilled individuals who had the ability and the means to thrive in a completely corrupt environment—that is, to thrive amidst that corruption—but not to thrive as honourable people, but precisely to assume dominant roles within that situation.

And it was the unscrupulous, dishonest, incompetent politicians who held the country's government in their hands; but, naturally, they neither knew how to solve the problems nor wanted to solve them. That was not a matter that interested them at all.

We, at least, had the good intentions and the aim of solving the problems from within the government, and starting from the premise that we would gain experience as we went along, and that it was a difficult matter—for which, as we have already said, there is no school for rulers.

Perhaps with the development of human society, as a series of governmental tasks become increasingly specialized, and ultimately, the work is divided among a greater number of technical personnel to carry out the various governmental tasks.

But, starting with ourselves, we have been gaining experience over these past two years; at the same time as we have been learning, we have been trying to teach. At the same time as we have been reasoning, we have tried to get others to reason along with us, and to enrich the people's experience with each of our own experiences, and also to enrich each of our own experiences with the people's experience. Because it is not that we have taught the people; we have learned much more from the people

than we have taught them, because what we know we draw from the people; the experience gained regarding living conditions and, in general, regarding almost all matters of interest to the government, we have acquired it from the people themselves, in every corner of the country. By talking with a teacher, one learns many things about education, many of the problems of education; by talking with doctors who work in the countryside, by talking with workers, one learns about the problems in factories; by talking with peasants, one learns about the problems in the countryside. And, in short, almost all of these problems have a source of solutions and information.

And that source of information lies, fundamentally, with the people. That has been one of our methods of learning: to seek out information from the people, to seek out experience from the people, to learn from the people about their needs, and to learn from the people about their feelings, their aspirations, their desires, and their concerns. We also gather ideas from the people, for the people are an extraordinary source of ideas. There are millions of minds thinking about the same thing, millions of minds offering solutions. And, in short, the task of a country's leaders is often to gather and develop many of those ideas.

In other words, this has been a process of education for everyone. We are all the first to be educated by the Revolution: government and people, which amounts to exactly the same thing.

Therefore, the masses of the country have acquired a great deal of political knowledge that they were actually unaware of in the years prior to the Revolution and in the early days of the Revolution. On international issues, for example, the people were largely ignorant of these problems. Regarding all international issues, we here had no other information than what reached us through U.S. news agencies, through U.S. magazines and newspapers, and through U.S. books. In general, our understanding of what was happening anywhere in the world came from what appeared in the news wires. Those wires were published in newspapers that

were, quite simply, at the service of those very same interests in our country.

And it is only now that we understand, for example, how many lies and how much venom were instilled in the minds of the people; how much false information. Why? Because we have had to live through that experience. And it is very curious, for example, to read a newswire from any of those agencies that publish abroad; the impression they come with—including some visitors to Cuba—due to the constant information they receive about horrible, atrocious things; they even go so far as to give the impression that the country lives in a state of chaos, under a state of civil war, of terror—in short, all those things.

When visitors come to Cuba—especially those who are easily misled—and they see the atmosphere of order, joy, and enthusiasm among the people, that is when they realize it, because many of them come from countries where, in reality, the people live in the agony of corrupt governments, of governments that do nothing for the people—just as the situation was in our country before the Revolution—and they clearly see the extraordinary difference between the people's state of mind and what they have seen in other countries.

Those news sources provided us not only with false information about what might be happening, but at the same time they offered commentary and analysis, because those wire services are not merely news agencies. That is to say, they don't just report that such-and-such happened; they are also commentators. In other words, they comment on the news and present it in the way that best suits the policies of imperialism. For a long time, our country lived virtually isolated from the world. We knew nothing of the world other than what a certain part of the world told us—the part of the world that dominated our country's economy and politically controlled our country through various means.

We often marginalized international issues. Furthermore, Cuba played no role on the international stage. It was a tiny island

that, for many Americans, was nothing more than a key adjacent to Florida.

I don't know if you are aware that many American college students—and, by the way, American educational institutions are very deficient—are exposed to a culture largely shaped by Hollywood, such as Westerns, gangster stories, and sexually explicit films, which distort and misrepresent the reality of the world. We have already spoken about this on more than one occasion—the ideas that, for example, were presented to us about Africa through a series of publications and films in which Africans always appeared as a savage people; never did an African poet, an African engineer, an African architect, an African doctor, an African revolutionary, or an African knowledgeable about the social and political problems of his country appear. They never told us about African culture; never, ever. Children, young people, and adults saw Africa, for example, in American films; they all dealt with the same theme: savage, half-naked tribes, armed with spears, cannibals, devourers of human beings. Then, the white man was the hero, the one who, in battle, with a rifle—and what a joke, because they were always armed with an automatic rifle, a machine gun—defeated the savage Africans, murdered the black Africans. So, those were the heroes of the movie.

And so, just think of all the poison we were exposed to in our childhood and youth! And that's exactly what American youth have been exposed to, for example. How difficult it is to make a truly progressive film in the United States! There are some American independent companies that make films of a certain kind—critical films—that criticize the social order, that criticize the ills of the society in which they live, but no matter how mild those criticisms may be, there is such a massive boycott and such a complete shutdown by the monopolistic film companies that they are completely stifled. There are some films from these independent companies that are good, that teach. You have, for example, the experience; you know what happened to Charles Chaplin, a rev-

olutionary artist, whose films were a lesson for the people. Well, they ended up effectively banning Charles Chaplin, expelling him from the United States. What was left then? Well, what remained were all the huckster writers, the business-minded writers, who were simply concerned with making that kind of movie, not with educating the people.

Anyone who wants to know or get an idea of what cultural deviation is—the distortion that culture is undergoing in the United States—need only look at the movie titles; that is, the most gruesome titles, the most sinister ones: crime, sexual themes, all kinds. Those are the titles. Anyone who wants to can go out on the buses, on the streets, and look at the titles, because those titles are still out there, unfortunately, just as there are many movies that aren't...

Analyse for yourselves, analyse those posters for yourselves, and you'll see how unedifying, how uninformative, how unpositive they are. And consider the influence that, for example, this has on young people, on American students, because when it's not a movie about savage blacks, it's a Western; when it's not that, the movies aren't about savage blacks, they're about Native Americans, so the hero is the white man killing the Native Americans. Because before, the redskins they were chasing were the Native Americans of the United States, and now the redskins they're chasing are the revolutionaries, whom they also label as redskins.

Otherwise, they're about these kinds of things: men robbing stagecoaches, men greedy for gold, always with the usual spectacle of half-naked women in all those places; otherwise, they're gangster movies; otherwise, they're cabaret movies; otherwise, they're gambling movies; otherwise, they're sex movies; the most extravagant and terrifying things these people can come up with. And, besides, they're silly, idiotic—that's why everyone knows how a movie will end the moment it starts.

That is so full of such superficiality that, naturally, it distances the people from true cultural values, and completely trivializes the minds of the masses, to the extent that you can imagine the situ-

ation of a country where cinema, television, the press, magazines, and the news are all directed by the same reactionary interests.

In this way, it is impossible for a society like American society to produce anything else. The life of a peasant, of a worker, life in a cooperative, for example, which will in the future be a source of so many interesting things for the country; the life of peasants, the life of workers, of fishermen—all those human themes, which will one day be the subject of the Revolution, of novels, of books, of cinema, of everything. Now, what can the United States show us other than what that society is: gangsterism, sex, selfishness, ambition, gambling; in short, everything that we can actually see. To see that, one need only look at some movie posters and watch some American films that are still out there.

That is why American youth are so ignorant of the problems of the rest of the world. And this topic of movies came up when I was about to tell you that for many Americans... And there were Cuban students in the United States, generally the children of wealthy families, who were very upset to find out at some American universities and colleges that those people often didn't know that Cuba was an independent island, didn't know that Cuba was an independent country. Of course, they weren't far from the truth either; perhaps the Platt Amendment, the right to intervene, the right to install and remove governments, the right to send in the Navy, the Naval Base—all those things—rightly led those young people to believe that Cuba wasn't independent. The only ones here who believed we were independent were the Cubans; a large portion of Cubans naively believed they lived in an independent country.

The Platt Amendment lasted a long time; afterward, it's not that the Platt Amendment disappeared; it changed its constitutional forms, but it continued to prevail, just as it has prevailed in the countries of the Americas; it is a *de facto* right of intervention established by the United States, because it didn't need any Platt Amendment in Haiti, it didn't need any Platt Amendment in Santo

Domingo, it didn't need any Platt Amendment in Nicaragua, nor in Mexico. In other words, even without the Platt Amendment, they assumed the right to intervene in any country, to send their warships, to land their marines, and, well...

But in Cuba it was not merely a matter of fact, but a matter of law that they had arrogated to themselves by force at the dawn of the republic. Later, the Platt Amendment disappeared, because they said: well, why do we need the Platt Amendment if, in the end, we exert decisive influence through the economy, through strict control of the economies of countries—countries that depend entirely on our market, countries that trade with no one but us; any country that offers the slightest resistance to our government is a country that cannot remain in power, because we can immediately strangle its economy through economic measures.

Hence, on one occasion this issue was discussed at a conference of representatives from Latin American countries, and it was agreed that economic aggression must be condemned. That is, to consider economic aggression a form of political aggression, as it truly is. And an agreement was reached—an agreement that, of course, has been worth nothing in the face of an empire that truly tears to shreds any norm of international law and morality.

But American students often believed that Cuba was part of U.S. territory, and so those students, the children of wealthy families, felt deeply offended; they felt deeply offended by that. So, they were the ones who claimed that those people were ignorant and didn't even know that Cuba was an island. Naturally, they were offended by that.

The fact that they owned the land, the industries, all those things—that didn't concern them. After all, they, along with the companies and monopolies, were the ones reaping the benefits of the nation's wealth and labor; but it offended them greatly—and it is curious—what did offend them was that, while they were there alongside the Americans, those students, the children of the wealthy just like themselves, could nevertheless afford the luxury

of believing that their island was an island owned by, or a state, or a colony, or a key of the United States. Their ignorance reached such an extreme that this was a true and very widespread belief.

High school students in the United States, given the existing educational system there and its shortcomings, are extraordinarily ignorant about international issues.

In reality, in recent years, and as a result of the upheavals affecting the world and the life of their own country, college students in the United States—and even high school students—have shown a growing interest, a significant increase in interest, in this international issue. Because, of course, the world has reached a point and a crossroads where it is impossible for any young person in any country—no matter how stifled the culture or how distorted the education in that country—not to begin to worry about these issues. But, in general, the educational programs there are very deficient.

It was only after the triumph of the Revolution that our country began to be recognized as a sovereign and independent nation in the United States. Until the triumph of the Revolution, our country—well, for most Americans—they didn't even really know where it was; a few drunken tourists, some professional gamblers, some gangsters, and the occasional decent person—because intellectuals also came, and naturally a portion of our visitors were decent people, and they always have an open door in our country, even if imperialism closes it on them.

That is why, within the Latin American context, our country did not appear as an international player either. It was also a small Yankee or pro-Yankee island; the Cubans, naturally, reacted to that reality. They considered themselves nothing in the world, they considered themselves without a voice or a vote in the world; at the UN, all they did was vote for whatever the U.S. delegate told them; at the OAS, all they did was vote for whatever the U.S. delegate told them. Cubans responded to that reality of being absolutely nothing, of meaning absolutely nothing in the world.

Hence, it was logical that interest in foreign affairs would not be aroused. In reality, it is impossible for us to believe that any country in the modern era can exist in isolation from the world and remain oblivious to everything around it; because, after all, we are a tiny part of a world that is incomparably larger than us, and whose relations with us affect and concern us.

In that vein, after the triumph of the Revolution, the people have begun to feel a great curiosity and have extraordinarily enriched their knowledge of international issues; their studies of all the problems facing other countries—studies that were previously forbidden; because, in reality, the Cuban people did not even have access to information, did not have access to literature from other countries, and, in short, the source of information and access to universal knowledge was also completely blocked.

In our educational programs, in our textbooks, everything was also influenced by that same spirit. The people have gradually acquired knowledge of the problems of Africa, the problems of Asia, the problems of Europe, and the problems of socialism; in short, they have come to understand the phenomenon of imperialism, the phenomenon of colonialism, they have come to understand socialist systems of production, and they have come to grasp, above all, in that formidable school that is life—and reality, which teaches far more than any textbook—all those problems that were previously completely unknown to the people. And over these past two years, the people have been going through a process in which they have increasingly opened their eyes to reality.

We have already, for example, come to understand what the United States was, we have come to understand what imperialism was, we have come to understand, through the harsh reality of events, what a country is like whose wealth, whose natural resources, whose major factories are in the hands of foreign monopolies; the resistance that those monopolies and those interests put up against any liberation movement, against any revolutionary movement; we have learned firsthand the history of revolutions.

That is why it would be so interesting to revisit now the books on the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution, so that we may come to understand that the problems those revolutions faced are the problems we have also been facing.

That is to say, the two revolutions on which many years have now passed, and which today are historical realities, and which today many people study calmly while sitting in their offices and reading... well, the problems of the French Revolution, for example, no longer move anyone; the feudal nobility has disappeared, the feudal monarchies have disappeared. But in that era, when almost all countries were doomed..., ruled by counts—and doomed as well—, marquises, princes, kings, rights inherited by blood; that is, it was ruled by blue-bloods, where the governments of the blue-blooded people—since these were two things that were perfectly identified—were hereditary...; that event of the French Revolution, by virtue of which the serfs, the peasants; the workers of France, together with a new social class consisting of merchants and industrialists—because there were people who did not have blue blood, but instead had ingenuity, and to make a living began to develop small-scale industry; there were people who did not have blue blood, but were very good merchants, and for blue-blooded people, commerce was even considered a dishonourable activity. But they were leaving that activity to a group of people who did not have blue blood.

All those people began to form a social class; they began to develop commerce, they began to develop industry, and, as a result, they acquired great social power. But the social power of that class was held back in its development by a series of feudal-style obstacles, a series of feudal-style rights. Among other things, the government was in the hands of a totally parasitic class, which, in the face of that emerging class—that working class—in short: their businesses were thriving, but there was that blue-blooded class, absolutely parasitic, which impeded the development of that new social class, which impeded the development of commerce and industry through a series of obstacles, a series of restrictions, a

series of taxes, and, furthermore, because that class governed with a class mentality that was already completely anachronistic for a society that was emerging at the dawn of the industrial era and at the dawn of the great development of international trade.

And that social class, united with the other social classes—that is, with the serfs who worked on the large estates—and united with the first groups of workers, carried out a revolution against the blue-bloods.

At that time, all over the world, the blue-blooded elite also controlled the sources of information and the universities; the clergy, too, naturally, was allied with the blue-blooded elite at that time—it was not allied with industrialists or merchants.

At that time, the cardinals did not wait in the antechambers or dine at banquets alongside senators and presidents, as they do today in the United States with the millionaire president of the country of consortia and monopolies, alongside the senators... back then, the cardinals waited in the antechambers at the gates of the court, of the imperial palaces, of the counts, of the princes. So, all those people who spoke of a republic—a republic that would represent the interests of that nascent class, since they were then outcasts—the pastoral letters were directed against merchants, industrialists, and revolutionaries because, quite simply, they represented a new social interest, in contrast to the social interest of the blue-blooded classes. It was the same phenomenon.

So, everywhere the French Revolution was anathematized by the blue-bloods, in their newspapers, in their books, from their pulpits, in their palaces, in their courts; in short, everywhere in the world war was waged against those revolutionary ideas that proclaimed that government should not be hereditary, that proclaimed a new social order by virtue of which a suitable channel would be found for the development of society's productive forces.

Then came the struggle, came the coalition of European countries, the coalition of the crowns of Europe, of the bluebloods of Europe: the bluebloods of Spain, of France, of Germany, of Austria,

of England, of the Italian principalities, of Russia, of Poland, of all the countries. There remained that country proclaiming the bourgeois revolution, surrounded by the armies of the bluebloods. And then they invaded France—supporting whom? The bluebloods of France; that is to say, supporting the counts, the marquises, the princes, the heirs of the Bourbons, who were in exile in England, in Spain, in Germany, and everywhere.

So there, naturally, the French revolutionaries, defending themselves against that aggression, defending themselves against the betrayals, found themselves compelled to resort to the guillotine. And then the entire campaign was against the guillotine, and that classic phenomenon of the Terror of the French Revolution was created. In short, it was all the allied powers of Europe, all the bluebloods of Europe, all the armies of Europe against the French people, who were fighting not only against internal reaction but against international reaction, and in the end they won the victory.

The same thing happened with the Russian Revolution. So, it was no longer the bluebloods; it was the ‘horchata-bloods’, as we might call them. Of course, there was still a feudal-style monarchical government in Russia, but it was not the kind of feudal monarchical government of the time of the French Revolution: there was already a nascent industry, and the phenomenon of imperialism was a reality; the English, French, and German bankers—in short, the bankers of Europe—had brought their money to buy up the oil wells, the coal mines, the iron mines; they controlled the public utilities, they controlled the banking system of the Soviet Union—at that time Russia, the Russia of the tsars—and they were also the owners of the Russian economy.

That Revolution was not merely a revolution against that order, that outdated system of monarchy; rather, it was a monarchical system in which the bluebloods had joined forces with the commoners. In other words, they had perfectly aligned their interests with those of the bankers, the monopolies, the mine owners, and the major industrialists.

In other words, they were the remnants of those blue-blooded people linked to that commercial and industrial class that had developed in Russia. The Russian Revolution was no longer a revolution of the French type, but was directed fundamentally against the social order represented by those two classes as well, and was aimed, precisely toward the abolition of the domination of society by the two groups represented: both the people who, by virtue of their blood, inherited a series of privileges, and the people who, by virtue of having accumulated the nation's resources in their hands, maintained economic and political control of the country at the expense of the peasants and the wretchedly exploited workers.

But what happens? When the Russian Revolution takes place, exactly the same thing happens as during the French Revolution: all the commoners of the world join forces even with the bluebloods, where remnants of blue blood remained, against whom? Against the Socialist Revolution in Russia, against the revolution of the workers and peasants, because the Russian Revolution was not the revolution of the merchants and industrialists against the bluebloods, but the revolution of the workers and peasants against the bluebloods and the commoners.

In the face of that Revolution, a reaction also arose throughout the world. The owners of the banks, the owners of the industries, the owners of the monopolies, the owners of the money—that is, the reactionary classes of the whole world—united once again with the clergy, which this time did not ally itself with Louis XVI, with the Bourbons, or anything of the sort. The clergy—with whom did they ally themselves? Ah, well, with the people who dominated the economy.

It was no longer the problems of the hereditary government of counts and marquises—no, although there may be one or two still linked to them—because in Spain they have a complete alliance, for example: the clergy, the nobility, the large landowners, imperialist finance capital, and the national capitalists of Spain; all these people form a tremendous force against the workers and against the

peasants who are in prison and who are being persecuted in Spain. It was the consequence of the Spanish people's defeat at the hands of not even that force, because that reactionary force in Spain—the priests, the nobles, the marquises, the industrialists, the imperialist financial capital in Spain—would not have been able to defeat the Spanish people, but the Spanish people were defeated by those people, directly supported by Hitler's tanks, by Hitler's planes, by entire divisions of fascists, of Mussolini's fascists, fighting against the heroic Spanish people, in the face of indifference, even complicity—the complicity of whom?—well, of the moneyed elite in France, the moneyed elite in England, the moneyed elite in the United States, in the face of that criminal intervention by fascism and Nazism in Spain, since, ultimately, these were social classes that did not want a social revolution to take place in Spain; they turned a blind eye, established a Non-Intervention Committee, but what the Non-Intervention Committee consisted of was that nothing could be sent to the Republicans, while the Nazis and the fascists, freely, sent weapons to the enemies of the Spanish people.

So all the wealthy people in the world turned against that socialist revolution, and then the legends began. They began in the newspapers, on the radio, through all the media of dissemination and information—all the media—to do to the Russian Revolution what they had done to the French Revolution. All those reactionary forces turned once again against the social revolution because, naturally, when a social revolution occurs in one country, the ruling classes in all other countries react against that social revolution.

There is a saying that goes: 'When you see your neighbour's beard on fire, soak yours.' When the ruling classes, the reactionaries of any country, see the beards of the ruling class in a neighbouring country on fire, they immediately soak theirs—that is, they begin to take all the measures that imperialism and international reaction take.

What is the reaction to the Cuban Revolution? Exactly that: all the reactionary governments of the world are against us, all the

governments of thieving politicians are against us, all the governments of large landowners who exploit Indigenous people, Black people, workers, and peasants are against us; all the administrators of all the monopolies—oil, electricity, mining, anywhere in the world—are against us. You don't suppose there's a single manager of an American monopoly who supports the Cuban Revolution and forms a solidarity committee with the Cuban Revolution; you have no doubt about that.

The day one of those men, for whatever reason—whether a light bulb went off in his head or because he was one of those unprecedented revolutionaries—joined a solidarity committee with Cuba, they'd kick him out of the monopoly the very next day. No president of any monopolistic company, of any mining, commercial, or industrial enterprise, anywhere in the world, will stand with the Cuban Revolution; no government of politicians and thieves will stand with the Cuban Revolution; no landowner anywhere in the world will stand with the Cuban Revolution; no reactionary in the world will stand with the Cuban Revolution.

Why? Because they are in all those dominated countries, exercising the empire of their economic and political domination, robbing the people, selling the country's economic resources in exchange for personal interests and the support provided by imperialism. No military caste—of the kind that has never gone to war, wears more braids than Napoleon Bonaparte did, and earns a higher salary than an emperor of old—those people are not with the Cuban Revolution either, nor can they be.

These people band together; they band together with the Pentagon, they band together in the Inter-American Defence Board, they band together in the UN, they band together in the OAS, they band together in the IAPA, they band together in all reactionary international organizations, against the Cuban Revolution. That is to say, the entire social class that does not want a revolution, because no thieving politician wants to be dethroned from his political dominance, no military caste wants to be replaced by a revolu-

tionary army; no large landowner wants agrarian reform imposed on him; no oil, mining, or any other kind of monopoly agrees to being nationalized. And, therefore, their instinctive reaction to preserve their interests in the face of a revolutionary phenomenon is to attack the Revolution.

So, we are facing the very same phenomenon that the French Revolution went through, that the Russian Revolution went through, and that the Chinese Revolution is going through. In other words, we are going through that stage of isolation and blockade by the international reaction.

You go to the UN: If anything is proposed in favour of Cuba, something is proposed against Cuba; if the Cuban delegate proposes something, the U.S. delegate proposes something else. Who votes in favour of the U.S.? All the colonialist countries, everyone who has a colony in the world—and you already know what it means to have a colony, past the first half of the 20th century, in these contemporary times, when man is about to reach the Moon—well, there are countries that own territory on another continent and govern it in a colonial manner.

Of course, they disguise their form of colonial domination; just as they did with the Platt Amendment. They seek out a local elite, representative of the economic interests of a certain class in those countries, send them to study at their universities, train them well, support them, and then make them presidents and leaders of that country. So they are no longer nominally colonies, but they are people completely dominated, in their mindset and interests, by the colonialist countries. When they go to the UN, they vote in favor of the colonial country; that is to say, in some countries the form has changed.

We see this in the case of Africa itself. Faced with an act as criminal, as humiliating for the African continent, and as unjust as the intervention in the Congo, the destruction of that country's independence, and the assassination of its leader—who was also one of the most prominent figures in African history; yet, in the

face of that event, which should have aroused complete solidarity among all African governments, this is not the case: the truly independent governments of Africa condemn the act, but a series of republics recently established by British and French colonialism... those countries and other European nations, where a group completely trained by colonialism directs the country's politics, amidst vast masses who have no right to vote, cannot read or write, and have no access—let alone to universities—to anything, not even to the villages. So, they vote in a way that suits the interests of those who perpetrated that crime against the nascent republic, against the country that wanted to be truly independent, and against the leader who restored that country's dignity.

Of course, these are the mentally colonized groups and the countries that are still colonies, even though they are nominally listed as independent countries, because the policy of the imperialists and colonialists in the United Nations—in the face of the undeniable fact that every day there is a growing number of neutral and independent countries—is to turn many of those territories into pseudo-republics; that is, countries that are not granted true freedom so that the United States can have more votes, and to counteract, through fictitious nations in the political order—that is, nations with truly fictitious independence—the growing number of those who vote alongside them, alongside the colonialists and the imperialists.

All thieving governments, without exception, will always vote against the Cuban Revolution. If there is a thieving government in the world, that thieving government will never vote in favor of Cuba. All colonialist and pro-imperialist governments? Against Cuba! All governments dominated by blue-bloods and the privileged elite? Against Cuba! That is an infallible law governing how all those governments representing such interests behave internationally.

So, the international reaction... we have a peculiarity here—I don't know if it's a virtue or a flaw, but ultimately, it makes no dif-

ference to us, because that won't alter the situation—and we have the peculiarity—and I was saying I don't know if it's a flaw, good luck, or bad luck—of being completely surrounded by reactionary oligarchies, that is, the people who dominate the politics of countries with their money and their monopolies surround our country, and carry out toward our country the same policy that the international reaction carried out toward the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Chinese Revolution.

Here we are, a small country, isolated in the middle of this continent, waging a truly heroic struggle. Ultimately, we believe it is a stroke of luck. Why should it be bad luck? This makes the people understand more fully the gigantic task before them, the merit of our Revolution, the heroism of our people, the courage of our people, how, in the face of all these hostile circumstances, they historically confront the consequences of the Revolution and stand up to that concerted effort, that international conspiracy of reaction, that blockade, those internationalist plans, those attempts to crush the Revolution.

And of course, the greater the difficulty of the geographical situation in which our country finds itself, the more meritorious it will be for our people to successfully carry the Revolution forward.

Today, the people are learning the lessons of history firsthand; they are learning firsthand what they could not learn before, when our country meant nothing in the world, was nothing in the world. I believe that today, at the very least, there is not a single student at any American college who does not know that this is a completely independent country.

And I hope that, at least in this regard, the children of the great landowners and major local industrialists—who felt deeply offended that the children of American millionaires believed this was a Florida key—now feel very proud to know that this is a country... that, at the very least, they know we exist on the world map.

And that is also the situation with respect to the rest of the Americas, and with respect to the rest of the world: that, first of

all, our country is already a country that captures the attention of numerous writers, intellectuals, and scholars of social and revolutionary issues; and, in short, that our country is a centre of admiration and curiosity for the rest of the world: from our enemies, because of the fear that revolutions inspire, and from those who are impartial, those who honestly study these issues as a revolutionary social phenomenon taking place in the Americas, and from our friends, simply as supporters of our Revolution; but the fact that our country has been gaining prestige in the world and is a factor in it—that is something neither the news agencies nor any of them have been able to prevent.

In their sphere of influence, where they indoctrinate people daily, they have been able to indoctrinate those interests that feel threatened by the Cuban Revolution; they try to influence the humblest segments of the population, based on lies, on gruesome stories, on legends, on fantastical tales; in short, they try to influence those strata with lies; but, in the long run, it is much more difficult for them to penetrate them, and, in turn, support for the Revolution arises from those very strata.

Now then, where does the Revolution expect its support, and where does its support lie? Who makes up the committees of solidarity with the Cuban Revolution? Well, quite the opposite: there is no magnate from any Yankee monopoly; but the humblest worker is very likely to be in that solidarity committee. There is no large landowner, but the humblest peasant is there. There are no millionaires, but the humble men of the people are there. There will be no intellectuals sold out to the IAPA, nor any technicians sold out to the monopolies; but the honest professional, the student with social and revolutionary concerns, the patriot, the anti-imperialist, everyone in Latin America who grieves at seeing their country in the hands of U.S. monopolies, oil in the hands of U.S. monopolies, mines in the hands of U.S. monopolies, commerce in the hands of U.S. monopolies, public services in the hands of U.S. monopolies.

All those who grieve, with sincere feeling, at seeing their country turned into a Yankee colony—they are sympathizers of the Cuban Revolution; they understand the problem. And so, among those masses, from all parts of the Americas, Africa, and Asia—where no one of blue blood or horchata blood will ever stand with the Revolution—there will be men of red blood, that is, true human beings, that is, those with the blood of human beings; those who were always victims of exploitation by the feudal lords in the Middle Ages, of exploitation by monopolies and exploiters in the modern and contemporary eras; the humiliated; the discriminated-against Black person from Africa, exploited, colonized, who was once torn from his lands, from the bosom of his family, and brought to work like a beast on the sugar plantations, in the mills.

That man from that continent, always humiliated, always exploited—he stands with the Revolution; the Latin American Indian, the exploited worker, the peasant—they feel our cause. Simply because this is the cause of those who here sought to put an end to discrimination, to put an end to the feudal exploitation of the land, to the exploitation by monopolies, to the exploitation by the great national capitals, which also accumulated wealth by exploiting the people, and through every possible means of extortion; those, those in whose veins human blood flows, they stand with the Revolution. The humble and the long-exploited, no matter how much they try to sow lies, confusion, and doubt—for that is, naturally, the very task of these other people who serve imperialism.

But that is where the solidarity committees draw their strength, that is where the demonstrations draw their strength, that is where the public support for the Cuban Revolution draws its strength.

And so, in the face of the reactionary clergy, in the face of the monopolies, in the face of the large landowners, in the face of the political hacks, in the face of the military castes, in the face of the cliques of thieves, in the face of the corrupt, in the face of the depraved, the gamblers, the gangsters... For example: all gamblers in the whole world are our enemies; all smugglers in the whole world

are our enemies; all gangsters in the whole world are our enemies; all drug traffickers in the whole world are our enemies; all profiteers in the whole world are our enemies; all owners of oil refineries..., the owners of monopolies, the owners of mines, the owners of oil wells are our enemies; all the mercenary writers sold out to those interests are our enemies; all the mercenary intellectuals sold out to those interests are our enemies.

Who are our friends? Honest intellectuals, honest journalists. There are various American writers who have written honestly and sympathetically about the Revolution. Ah, because all over the world there are writers, journalists, and honest politicians—they stand with the Revolution! Here there are people who cannot be bought for any amount of money. Who is against us? All those who can be bought for some money.

This is part of education. Why? Because the most important education is the political education of the people. Today the people have all kinds of books on the street; they have books they never had access to before. I think for 20 cents sometimes, 25 cents other times, because there is something that is in abundance in the Revolution, unlike in any other country in the Americas, unlike anything that ever remotely existed in our country, where there is a shortage of some things—luxury items—and, of course, some other things that may be important but are not vital. However, we must contrast what the Revolution has meant in the realm of culture, of books. The abundance of books—with what paper? Well, with the paper that was previously used by a number of newspapers here that were shut down, that shut themselves down—that is, that went bankrupt... Why? This is very curious. They were dedicated to spreading propaganda—for whom? All the newspapers here that served the reactionary forces received thousands and thousands of pesos in payroll from the ministries, and in cash, in the form of a little check sent directly to the editors.

But, in addition, there was another type of bribery. It was advertising, through which the large conglomerates and monopolies

paid for that press. How? For example, the electric company was a monopoly; it didn't compete with anyone here; it didn't need to advertise at all. Well, it had a budget: one million, two million, three million pesos for ads. So they gave those ads to the various magazines and newspapers: 'K-Listo Kilowatt, the services it has provided to the people, how good K-Listo Kilowatt is, the company so efficient that...' So there were ads like that, worth so many thousands of pesos.

The telephone company was another monopoly. Who has ever seen a monopoly advertise? Commercial advertising traditionally served the purpose of selling in competition with other products, but the monopoly would invest one, two, or three million pesos to subsidize the press, which ran campaigns promoting those interests. And just imagine how a country can come to understand how harmful a monopoly is, the exploitation that a monopolistic company entails, how much it overcharges for public services, and the injustices committed against the people, if in every magazine, on every radio and television station, there is a eulogy for that company and that monopoly. Why? Because they spend two or three million pesos every year, and this happens all over the world; it's the ploy, the fig leaf they use to cover up a blatant sellout to those interests.

Paper, machinery, lead, foreign currency, human labour—all of which were not invested in writing things that would enlighten and educate the people. Paper, lead, machinery, foreign currency, and human energy that were invested in extolling the superfluous, in defending monopolies, in glorifying and promoting corrupt politicians and thieves, in keeping the blindfold over the people's eyes, in fostering gambling, vice, and lies. All that energy was invested in that, which today is invested in books. And those newspaper printing presses that went bankrupt—because that was their livelihood—were converted into book printing presses. Paper, lead, currency, machinery, and human energy were dedicated to publishing millions of books. And just last year, the national publishing house produced millions of books—books of every kind:

from school textbooks to books on politics, culture, and literature, of all kinds.

In other words, the people have access to something they did not have access to before: books. Millions of books, and more and more millions of books, where before they were dedicated to glorifying vice and lies, and to serving miserable interests.

That worker in the printing press knows he is printing a book that will be read by the peasant in Baracoa, in the Sierra Maestra, in the cooperatives, on the farms, in the factories; he knows he is printing a literacy primer that will teach more than a million people who could not read or write, school supplies for those children, to expand the people's culture. The people have access to those books today. Political books for the people to read; we do not tell the people: Believe! We tell them: Read! We do not tell them this is a dogma... .

The reaction did not tell the people: 'Read'; rather, 'Believe.' And, therefore, it deprived them of the opportunity to have books; a book cost two or three pesos, and four, and more. It didn't provide them with books, or create literacy primers to teach peasants, workers, and all those who couldn't read or write to read; no, it told them: Believe. It didn't give them access to culture; the newspapers were full of lies.

And through all the media—movies, newspapers, magazines, everything—at the service of those interests we spoke of before, to glorify vice, the base instincts of the people, the spirit of gambling; to defend interests hostile to the people's economy. That was what they offered the people. And the Revolution tells the people: Learn to read and write; study, read, inform yourself, reflect, observe, think. Why? Because that is the path to truth; to make the people reason, to make the people analyse. Not for some man to come from a pulpit and tell them four lies that the people have to believe.

And that is why millions of books are being printed, so that the people can educate themselves, so that the people can understand international issues, economic issues, political issues, so

that the people can perfectly understand the difference between one institution and another; between a sugarcane plantation and an agricultural cooperative; between a cattle ranch and a people's farm; between a squatter or a sharecropper, who pays 30 per cent or 40 per cent of their produce to a man who has never been there and who, in most cases, holds highly dubious titles to those lands, and always dubious from the standpoint of social justice, that he had to pay almost all of what was left to him—or all of what was left to him—to a man who claimed to be the owner of it; the difference between a sharecropper, a tenant farmer, and a peasant who today owns everything he produces, whom no one takes it from, and who, moreover, receives assistance to farm, receives loans for investment, and loans for repairs.

These are the things that the Revolution offers the opportunity to distinguish between all things of the past and the present in every sphere, in every sphere of life, in every sector, in every aspect, in every human, social, political, and economic sense. That is the Revolution that hurts some people, that Revolution that burns some people, that Revolution that some people cannot wrap their heads around, that Revolution that causes psychological trauma to some people, who are incapable of understanding what it really is, and allow themselves to be enveloped by the vague cloud of lies, by the counterrevolutionary anaesthesia, so they fail to see how they are being led into the fold of imperialism, how they are, little by little, being led into the service of the interests of the colonialists, the slaveholders, the imperialists, the enemies of humanity, the enemies of culture, the enemies of science, the enemies of justice—in short, the enemies of humanity, and the enemies of God.

That is what the Revolution, as a Revolution and as a great teacher, has been teaching all of us. And, for the time being, every revolution is an extraordinary process of education. That is why revolution and education are one and the same.

Now, revolution and instruction; revolution and teaching; revolution and the training of technicians; revolution and the training

of professionals—these are other tasks of the Revolution. The Revolution has worked in a general sense to educate the people; the Revolution has made all means of dissemination available to the people, books available to the people. But there has been another aspect of the Revolution's work in education. I was trying to quickly jot down a few things here, because there are so many that my memory can't hold them all, but just to get an idea... Let's see if I can remember them, and there must be some I don't recall...

First of all, in the realm of education—and this is to conclude the program—for those who had to engage in general educational efforts, everything stemmed from a situation where there was no encouragement of culture; no effort in pursuit of truth or in support of the people's education, since they did not even begin where they should have started. It is unquestionable that the very least a human being must know is how to read and write. When a person cannot read or write, they are truly situated at the lowest rung on the human ladder. First, their knowledge is extraordinarily limited; second, there is a wealth—a great wealth—of which all humanity is the heir. It is not a sugar mill, nor a gold mine; it is not material goods, but in reality it is humanity's most valuable wealth, because it is what humanity has created with its intelligence and effort. There is the cultural wealth of humanity; all the talented people of humanity, all the geniuses of humanity, have produced something, have written, have taught. There exists a vast cultural wealth, produced by humanity, of which all of humanity is the heir. And the humblest man, the poorest man, the man who lacks material possessions, possesses the wealth of all the works, all the books, and all the teachings bequeathed to him by thousands upon thousands of the most prominent men of the human race.

From the moment a man cannot read or write, he is a man who has renounced that inheritance; he is a man completely deprived of that immense spiritual wealth that humanity has produced.

Those of us who have at times been in prisons—prisons where one cannot move, where no other activity can be carried out—

have had the opportunity to truly appreciate what that man-made wealth is, when a book is the only companion, the only friend, the one that makes us forget those hours of imprisonment; it teaches us, enlightens us, makes us experience times past, makes us experience all the eras of humanity. And so a prisoner would trade all the gold in the world for a book in prison. That is when he realizes what that wealth is—what helps him, what stimulates him, what gives him the strength to endure the vicissitudes and adversity.

And many times we have had that opportunity to know what a book is worth. Imagine a man in those conditions, who could neither read nor write, for then not even that priceless wealth, that wealth that a book constitutes, could be within his reach. The man who cannot read or write is deprived of the greatest wealth humanity possesses: what man has created with his intelligence. Deprived by society of that wealth, because after all, it is not the fault of any citizen who cannot read or write. And we have had occasions, at times, to gather with several hundred men and ask them: ‘Raise your hand if you cannot read or write.’ ‘Why can’t you read or write?’ ‘Because where I lived, there was no school and no teacher.’ ‘Why can’t you read or write?’ ‘Because I lost my father and from the age of six I had to help my mother work. I couldn’t go to school.’ ‘Why can’t you read or write?’ ‘We couldn’t because there were nine of us siblings and we had to work at home, or because we didn’t have shoes, or because we didn’t have clothes; or also because their family was negligent—that is, their family didn’t care about their children’s education—because they themselves didn’t go to school and couldn’t appreciate the value of studying, in most cases due to a lack of teachers. That is the first reason why there were so many illiterate people; secondly, for economic reasons, because they had no clothes or shoes to go to school, and anyone can perfectly understand that with the wages paid in the countryside, a family with six or seven children could not afford to buy clothes and shoes.

Those are the fundamental reasons: a lack of teachers, a lack of economic resources. In short, it was an economic and social

problem, by virtue of which in our country—and it is not one of the worst-off in the Americas—more than a million people could not read or write. And a large portion of them are... We must distinguish between the illiterate and the semi-literate, those who can barely spell a word.

But the moment we undertake the task of teaching everyone to read and write, even the humblest person in the village will have become entitled to all the treasures that human intelligence has accumulated in knowledge and wisdom; even the humblest person in the village will have access to all the works of art in literature, from the moment they learn to read and write.

It seemed the most natural thing in the world that more than a million people were deprived of that opportunity. And so it was. When would that situation end? That situation was never going to end.

Now we must set ourselves other goals; now we must set ourselves other feats^{*}

Comrades of the brigades: you have asked me many times to tell you what new tasks we have for you. Well, we have tasks, many tasks for you. Well, I'll begin. There are quite a few tasks, there are tasks for everyone, and we'll see if we can carry them out. I'm going to explain them slowly.

First: we need—pay attention so that everyone can choose—we need 2,000 sixth-grade graduates —stay calm—for the introductory course in teacher training, which will take place over one year and then, in Topes de Collantes, over two years, and so on. We need 2,000 sixth-grade graduates for that introductory course, which will take place in San Lorenzo and in Minas del Frío, whether they are boys or girls, from the countryside or the city. We need 2,000 who want to enrol in that course, so that they can later continue studying to become teachers and who have, at the very least, passed sixth grade. This is a task. Go ahead and choose; there are plenty to choose from.

Second: we need 1,300 junior high school graduates for the 'Manuel Ascunce' Primary Teachers' College in Topes de Collantes. I repeat: 1,300 junior high school graduates for the 'Manuel Ascunce' Primary Teachers' College in Topes de Collantes, boys or girls; the program lasts two years, after which students will be awarded a first-cycle teaching certificate qualifying them to teach

* Excerpts of speech delivered at the rally held in the 'José Martí' Revolution Square to proclaim Cuba a 'Territory Free of Illiteracy', on December 22, 1961, the 'Year of Education'.

in first through fourth-grade classrooms; two additional years will qualify graduates as second-cycle teachers, enabling them to also teach in fifth and sixth-grade classrooms, whether in the city or in rural areas.

Third: We need 5,000 sixth-grade graduates to enrol in industrial technical schools, whether they're from the city or the countryside.

There's more: we need—all of whom will receive scholarships—2,500 junior high school graduates to begin their studies at industrial technical institutes. That is, 5,000 sixth-grade graduates for the industrial technical schools—the lower level—and 2,500 junior high school graduates to begin their studies at the industrial technical institutes, whether they're from the city or the countryside. Is that clear? Good, all of this, with preference given to brigade members.

We need 2,300 eighth-grade graduates to also enter as scholarship students at the Héroes de Girón School for Russian Language Teachers, whether boys or girls, from the city or the countryside. They will, of course, continue studying for their high school diploma—that is, their secondary and pre-university education—but at the same time they will receive training to qualify as Russian language teachers; they will not study only that, but will continue studying for their secondary and pre-university education. For that, we need 2,300 eighth-graders to also enrol as scholarship students, preferably brigade members .

We need 200 junior high school graduates to study, as boarding students at the language school, other languages that will qualify them to perform various roles: interpreters, translators, in government agencies; that is, 200 for different languages at the language school; the other school is for Russian language teachers, and, furthermore, it remains a high school and then a pre-university program. Do you understand? Is that clear?

We need—and these are girls; there is discrimination here against boys—1,500 female brigadistas—these must be brigadistas—100 percent brigadistas; 1,500 for a special school also for fe-

male teachers that will also be held at the Héroes de Girón School, where they will study primary education in the morning, political and economic theory in the afternoon, and in the evening they will work teaching at night schools for domestic workers.

Therefore, they must be very hardworking, high-quality girls who are in their first or second year of junior high school. Do you understand? A school with strict discipline, a school with a lot of work. They will continue studying, teaching, and studying. And there is a program for those schools.

Note, this is different, so there is no confusion. There are 2,000 sixth-graders... Let me clarify: 2,000 who have completed sixth grade for the introductory course in San Lorenzo; 1,300 who have graduated from lower secondary school for the teachers' college in Topes de Collantes. And these 1,500 must have completed more than sixth grade—that is, they must have passed at least seventh or eighth grade; they are the ones going to the Héroes de Girón school to study to become elementary school teachers, and they will also be teaching classes, that is, they will be working at night. Is that clear? Take note.

We need 1,500 students for arts programs—that is, drama, visual arts, and certain musical instruments. In other words, roughly 1,500 junior high school students currently in their first, second, or third year; 1,500 for the National Academy of Arts. That is to say, it is a long program—not for instructors, let me clarify—but they will study those arts at the National Academy, which also begins operating at the start of the year.

Now, for art instructors—which is a two-year program to teach in cooperatives and farms, that is, in singing, dancing, and theatre—we need 1,500.

Understand this well: 1,500 for the National Academy of Art will study for many years, and 1,500 for the school of art instructors, which is a two-year program. That is, they won't be studying to become artists, but rather to become instructors in an intensive course. Understood? Good, there's still more!

We need 4,000—in all these programs I've mentioned, except for the Héroes de Girón program for female teachers, who will teach domestic workers; in all the others, they are boys or girls; at the Héroes de Girón school for female teachers, they will be girls. Now, we need 4,000 students who have completed basic secondary school, or who are in pre-university studies, to study pre-university education. That is, for those destined for university, we need 4,000.

Of course, in this case, we must give preference to those who have already completed basic secondary school and live in a town where there is no basic secondary school. Do you understand? Preference to the brigadistas who have completed basic secondary school and in the town where they live there is no basic secondary school. That comes first; because we must give opportunities to other young people even if they are not brigadistas. But preference goes to brigadistas who have passed lower secondary school. And where there is no lower secondary school—that is, no pre-university program—no pre-university program in the town where they live. Preference goes to those. And, furthermore, to brigade members who, even if there are pre-university programs where they study, come from extremely poor families, do you understand?

Let's suppose a brigade member who has many siblings, whose family has a meagre income, and who, even if there is a pre-university program in the town where he lives, needs a scholarship. Understood?

Preference: for the very poor, for those with the lowest incomes, even if there is a pre-university program in the town where they are from, or in any case for a brigadier who does not have a pre-university program in the town where they live. Understood? They have preference there.

In other words, these 4,000 scholarships are for brigadistas—I repeat—who, even if they live in towns where there is a pre-university program, have families in very tight financial straits; or for brigadistas who live in towns where there is no pre-university program, and therefore could not study there. Understood?

And I'm short 20,000. But these 20,000—pay close attention... They must also be given preference. Preference: these 20,000 spots are for kids who have passed sixth grade, and want to attend lower secondary school, but in the towns where they live—sugar mills or small towns—there is no lower secondary school... Do you understand?

That is, for the brigadistas, with preference, who have passed sixth grade, want to attend junior high school to later study at a pre-university program and in college, or to later study at a technical institute—do you understand?— and yet, even though they have passed sixth grade, they live in the countryside or at a sugar mill, or in a small town where there is no junior high school; or student brigadistas who, even if they live in a town where there is a junior high school, come from families in very difficult financial situations and, as a result, believe they need a scholarship to be able to study. Is that clear?

I'll repeat. Priority: to brigadistas who have passed sixth grade and whose town has no junior high school, and who want to attend junior high school, to later study pre-university and then pursue a university degree; or to attend junior high school, to later enter a technical institute, and, however, cannot do so because there is no junior high school in their town; or a brigade member who wants to attend junior high school and lives in a town where there is a junior high school, but whose family, due to having many siblings and a low income, is in a tight financial situation, and they believe they truly need a scholarship to be able to study. Understood?

Once these cases have been addressed, these scholarships will also be available to other students—even if they are not brigadistas—who live in villages without a secondary school, or whose family's financial situation is very tight. But priority goes to brigadistas, which brings the total to 40,800 scholarships.

To that we must add the scholarships for university students, the scholarships for those already studying at the art instructors' school, and many other schools. This is just the outline regarding you.

This means that at least 20,000 to 30,000 brigadistas can study on scholarships at all these institutions and will be given preference in admission. In all other cases, the right is equal for all, except for the 4,000 pre-university spots and the 20,000 lower secondary spots, where preference will be given to those who do not have a secondary school in their town, or to those who are too poor.

And for the 1,500 spots for Heroes of Girón, which must be for girls. For all others, consideration will be given simply to the application, the status as a brigadier, and the desire to pursue those studies.

Of course, there may be many thousands of you, but in any case, you should keep the following in mind: many of you can also attend technical schools in your own town, do you understand? You can attend technical schools in the town where you live. There are others who, due to their family situation and income, can study at the basic secondary school in the town where they live, or in pre-university, so they don't need a scholarship for pre-university or basic secondary school. Do you understand?

So, in those cases, you should study at the junior high schools and pre-university programs in the places where you live. I think all of that is clear.

And what tasks do those who do not receive scholarships have? Ah, well, they have the task of studying as well.

That is what we want to tell you that you have to do. We have already eradicated illiteracy; well then: Now we have to keep going! First of all, the follow-up campaign that teachers and education workers must carry out. But your most important task... Ah, well, I'll say it: we need the 100,000 brigade members to become technicians, to graduate from technical schools, to become language teachers, to become engineers, to become doctors, to become economists, to become architects, to become educators, to become specialized technicians. We have an extraordinary need for that.

The Revolution, after having asked you to make the effort you have made in literacy, after having asked you to bring education

Now we must set ourselves other goals;
now we must set ourselves other feats

through valleys and mountains, now asks you to become technicians, to become engineers, to become economists, to become teachers, to become art instructors, to become artists, to become professors.

Now they have to work with you, now they have to work with you, now we need to move forward; but to move forward intensively, to move forward with the utmost urgency. Now we have to set other goals for ourselves, now we have to set other feats for ourselves.

For example: it is essential that by the year 1964, thousands and thousands of high school graduates enrol in technical programs; we need that, and we must therefore aim for at least 2,000 of the 20,000 secondary school scholarship recipients to complete two years of secondary school and pre-university studies.

Well, that is possible. With the enthusiasm you have, with the experience you have gained, with the country's needs, and with what can be achieved in a revolution, we are confident that one in four students—among those scholarship recipients—can do it.

In the first quarter, we are going to select the 5,000 best students, and we are going to work with them in intensive courses to graduate at least 5,000, so that they can enter university in 1964. Our economy demands it; the Revolution demands it. And after seeing what you have accomplished this year, we believe you are capable of achieving any feat, any task, no matter how difficult it may be.

Now then: you have received some forms, but there may be some who do not receive them; there may be forms that get lost. And so that no one is left without the opportunity to have their application processed, all of you—those who wish to take advantage of these programs, those who are in need—because there may be many who want to study basic secondary school and can do so in their town, or who can study pre-university; all those who wish to take advantage of these programs and are in need should, as soon as they arrive in their towns, send a telegram to the National Lit-

eracy Commission—in addition to having filled out the forms—requesting the type of scholarship they desire for a specific course of study, stating their address, indicating their status as literacy brigade members, and the location where they conducted literacy work. That is all. It may be that in some areas there are more applications, and then we will have to choose, but, in any case, everyone who wishes to take advantage of these programs should apply, so that no one is left out.

Tomorrow in the newspapers you can read everything that has been said again, in case there are any doubts, right? And so, those who wish to study to become teachers of Russian or other languages, or female teachers, or male teachers—that is, elementary school teachers—to go to the Minas del Frío, or because they have already passed basic secondary school, and want to go to the ‘Manuel Ascunce’ school, or because they are in seventh or eighth grade and want to join the primary school teacher program, or want to study art, or want to train as art instructors, or want to study at a technical institute, or want to study at a technical school—they should state this clearly. And then, the Commission receives all the applications.

Do you know why? Because the school year starts in January. Almost all of these courses—perhaps the one at the National Academy of Art might be delayed a bit, by a month—but all the others start in January. So, as soon as they arrive, those who want to enrol in these programs should send their telegram. They’ll have to go to the town post office and all that; it might be a lot of work, but send your telegram, because we urgently need to select and decide.

This way we’ll simplify the procedures, and everyone will have a chance, without anyone missing out because their application gets lost, misplaced, or never received. This way, we can resolve all these issues very quickly.

I urge you to carefully consider all these words so that you may make your decision. This represents an extraordinary opportunity for everyone, especially to pursue your calling, and for those with-

Now we must set ourselves other goals;
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out the means to study to be able to do so; this means that with the pre-university programs that have opened, the high schools that have opened, the technical schools that have opened, and the scholarships that have been awarded, any of you, young comrades, any of you who have been able to achieve such a great feat, any of you who have been able to bring light to our countryside, any of you who are young people with the world and the future in your hands, who have a fruitful and creative life, an extraordinary life ahead of you, may you take this opportunity as a reward for the work you have done, as a reward for your love of the homeland, as recognition from the people for what you have done, as the fruit of the work you have already accomplished, as a legitimate right you have earned, as young people who have been able to write one of the most beautiful chapters in the history of education and culture.

Forward, comrades, toward new goals, to fulfil new promises, to carry out new tasks, to become teachers, to become technicians, to become doctors, to become professors, to become engineers, to become revolutionary intellectuals!

There can be no aesthetic value without human content*

They will—we say—receive the utmost attention from the Party and the Revolutionary Government, because for all of us this Congress will also serve to provide us with more detailed, more thorough information on the problems, and also to give us access to that magnificent material that has been developed for work in the field of education.

For, although significant resources have been devoted to education, we still did not see clearly enough, we still had not fully grasped how there remained potential resources to support educational activities; resources that the Revolution holds in its hands and which, although they have been utilized in this regard, can still contribute much more to education.

We have, of course, the mass organizations, which are fully committed to the educators' mission. But we also have other technical resources; we have the mass media; we have the resources that have been mentioned.

Take the Book Institute, for example. It is true that a major effort has been made in printing. It is true that the number of books printed has tripled or quadrupled. It is true that, even if we were to meet 100 per cent of the needs, all those printing presses and all that capacity are still limited, even including the new printing press provided to us by our friends in the German Democratic Republic, which is about to go into production.

* Excerpts of speech delivered at the closing of the First National Congress on Education and Culture, held at the CTC theatre on April 30, 1971, the 'Year of Productivity'.

But we must have a clear criterion regarding the priorities of our Book Institute. And that criterion can be summed up in these words: among the books printed at the Book Institute, the first priority must be books for education, the second priority must be books for education, and the third priority must be books for education! That is crystal clear.

At times, certain books have been printed. The number doesn't matter. As a matter of principle, there are some books of which not a single copy, not a single chapter, not a single page, not a single letter should be published!

Of course, we have to take learning into account—our own learning. Of course, over the course of these years we have come to know the world and its characters better every day. Some of those characters were portrayed here in vivid, exaggerated colors. Like those who even tried to present themselves as supporters of the Revolution, among whom there was every kind of character!

But we already know them, and our experience will serve others, and will serve Latin American countries, and will serve Asian and African countries.

We have uncovered that other subtle form of colonization that often persists and seeks to survive economic imperialism and colonialism, and that is cultural imperialism and political colonialism—an evil we have thoroughly exposed. It had some manifestations here, but it's not even worth pausing to discuss them. We believe that the Congress and its resolutions are more than sufficient to crush those currents, as if with a catapult.

...

Now, regarding these tools: every book published here, every piece of paper printed, every useful space we have available anywhere, in all media outlets—I'm not saying we're going to use them 100 per cent for education. Unfortunately, we can't. But we cannot do so not because they are not available, but because we would not

have the materials or the qualified personnel necessary to dedicate the entire television network, entirely, to education. If education is attractive, culture is part of education; the finest cultural works, the finest artistic creations of man and humanity are part of education. But whatever can be used will be used. And they must be used more and more.

Here we were talking about our need for children's films, children's television programs, and children's literature. And it's not just Cuba; practically the whole world lacks these things. But how are we going to have children's programs if some writers emerge who are influenced by those trends and then seek to make a name for themselves, not by writing something useful for the country but by serving imperialist ideological currents? How have these gentlemen—often writers of trash—been receiving awards? Because regardless of their technical skill in writing or their imagination, we as revolutionaries evaluate cultural works based on the values they embody for the people.

For us, a revolutionary people in a revolutionary process, we evaluate cultural and artistic creations based on their usefulness to the people, based on what they contribute to humanity, based on what they contribute to the cause of humanity, to the liberation of humanity, to the happiness of humanity.

Our evaluation is political. There can be no aesthetic value without human content. There can be no aesthetic value that works against humanity. There can be no aesthetic value that works against justice, against well-being, against liberation, against human happiness. There simply cannot be!

For a bourgeois, anything can be an aesthetic value—as long as it entertains him, amuses him, helps him pass the time and alleviate the boredom of a loafer and an unproductive parasite. But that cannot be the standard for a worker, for a revolutionary, for a communist. And we must not fear expressing these ideas with complete clarity. If revolutionaries had been afraid of their ideas, where on earth would they be? They would have 10 chains around

their necks and 100,000 legs on their shoulders—I don't mean feet—the legs of executioners, oppressors, and imperialists. There is a reason why a revolution is a revolution and why it exists and develops. And there is a reason why revolutionaries exist, and they exist for a purpose. And those are the values, and they must be so; there can be no other assessments.

Well, we were saying that, of course, it's logical that we lack children's literature. A privileged minority writing about matters from which no practical use could be derived, expressions of decadence. Ah, but in part also because certain criteria have been adopted here. In contemporary times, who is considered an intellectual? There is a small group that has monopolized the title of intellectuals and intellectual workers. Scientists, professors, teachers, engineers, technicians, researchers—no, they are not intellectuals. You do not work with intelligence. According to that criterion, educators are not intellectuals.

But there has also been a certain inhibition on the part of true intellectuals, who have left the problems of culture in the hands of a small group of sorcerers. They are like the sorcerers of the tribes in primitive times, who dealt with God, and with the Devil as well, and who also healed—they knew the herbs that healed, the recipes, the prayers, and the gestures that healed.

And that phenomenon still occurs in the midst of our primitivism. A small group of sorcerers who are the ones who know the arts and tricks of culture and claim to be just that.

And that is why it has been proposed that we in the field of culture must widely promote the participation of the masses and ensure that cultural creation is the work of the masses and enjoyed by the masses. And that the finest values humanity has created over the centuries—from ancient literature, sculptures, and paintings, just as the principles of science, mathematics, geometry, and astronomy were—may become the heritage of the masses, may be within the reach of the masses, and may be understood and enjoyed by the masses. And that the masses themselves be creators.

Do we not have nearly 100,000 teachers and educators? Have we not seen in this Congress brilliant speeches, sharp and profound intellects, imagination, character, and so many virtues in abundance? Is it not the case that among nearly 100,000 teachers and educators—to mention just one sector of our workforce—they could not promote a formidable cultural movement, a formidable artistic movement, a formidable literary movement? Why don't we seek, why don't we promote, so that new talents may emerge, so that we can meet those needs, so that we can have children's literature, so that we can have many more educational, cultural, and children's radio and television programs? That is what we must do; that is the mass movement we must propose.

What better example than today's, in the performances given by the students, young people from middle school and high school? Some of those students represented certain schools, where all students participate in a Scientific Interest Circle, and where all students participate in cultural activities, and write—they write poetry, literary works, and plays—and perform, and engage in all kinds of cultural activities. And here we have seen them tonight.

If we can do that in all schools—and we can do it—didn't we see a group of children?—we can and must do it starting with the children's circles, in elementary school, in high school, in the factory. Why should we be concerned with the magic of those sorcerers? Why should we be concerned, when we know we have the power to make an entire people creative, to make an entire people intellectual, to make them writers, to make them artists? An entire people! If that is what the Revolution is, if that is what socialism is, if that is what communism is, because it aims to bring the benefits of science, culture, and art to the masses, to all of society liberated from exploitation. If that, and everything that contributes to human well-being... Why do we fight? What are we fighting for?

And what exactly was it that stirred your interest, your passion, at this Congress, if not thinking about what you could bring there in terms of culture, progress, improvement, well-being, and

happiness to the children, the youth, and the workers whom you teach?

And that is what we want for the entire people. That is what we want for future generations. And it is in our hands. What is stopping us? What can stop us? Nothing! No barrier, no obstacle stands in our way, except perhaps our own material limitations, our lack of resources, our shortage of personnel. That is the only thing!

Here, all available resources, all wealth, all hands, all minds, all hearts, are at the service of that.

And that will be our society of the future, represented here by these young people. But we must find a way to involve millions of children and young people in this endeavour, to struggle and work for the country's economic development—for the material foundation that, together with advances in science, education, and the movement of cadres and qualified personnel, will enable us to achieve this.

Nothing can stop us! That is the wonderful advantage of our homeland today. We do not live under capitalism; there are no bourgeois exploiting the workers—no! Our resources are in the hands of the people themselves.

And so, while capitalist Europe is in decline, and declining more and more, and no one knows where its fall will end, like a sinking ship... And along with the ships, in this stormy sea of history, its intellectual rats will also sink.

When I say intellectual rats, let it be clear that we are not referring, by any means, to all intellectuals. No! There, too, they are a minority! But I am talking about the sailors, the rats who seek to turn their miserable role as crew members of ships sinking in the stormy seas of history into something transcendental.

That is how it is. And it is a matter of years—perhaps not even many! It is a matter of time. Those decadent societies, rotten and eaten away to the marrow of their bones by their own contradictions, will not last long. And while they sink to the bottom, we—with hard work, with effort, with difficulties, yes—but we are rising upward...

A revolution can only be the child of culture and ideas*

A few weeks ago, in Santiago de Cuba, on January 1, 1999, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the triumph of the Revolution, from the very same balcony, of the very same building where I spoke that time, on January 1, 1959, I reflected with the audience gathered there that the people of today were not the same people of that time, because of the 11 million compatriots we are today, 7,190,000 had been born after that day. That they were two different peoples, and yet, at the same time, the same eternal people of Cuba.

I also reminded them that the vast majority of those who were 50 years old at the time were no longer with us, and those who were children were now over 40.

Look at how many changes, how many differences, and what a special meaning it held for us to think that there we had the people who began a profound revolution when they were practically illiterate, when 30 per cent of adults could not read or write, and when perhaps an additional 50 per cent had not reached the fifth grade. Perhaps fewer; we calculated that at that time, with a population of nearly 7 million, those who had gone beyond the fifth grade likely numbered no more than 250,000, and today university graduates alone numbered 600,000, and among professors and teachers the figure reached nearly 300,000.

I told my compatriots, in honour of the people who had achieved their first great triumph 40 years ago, despite their enor-

* Excerpts of speech delivered in the Aula Magna of the Central University of Venezuela, Caracas, on February 3, 1999.

mous educational backwardness, that they had been capable of carrying out and defending an extraordinary revolutionary feat. One more thing: It is possible that their level of political culture was also below their level of education. Those were the times of fierce anti-communism, the final years of McCarthyism, when by every possible means that powerful, imperial neighbour had tried to instil in our noble people every possible lie and prejudice, so that I often found myself speaking with an ordinary citizen and asking him a series of questions: Whether they thought we should carry out agrarian reform; whether it would be fair for families to one day own their homes, for which they sometimes paid large landlords up to half their wages; whether they thought it was right that all those banks where citizens' money was deposited, instead of being owned by private institutions, should be owned by the people so that those resources could finance the country's development; whether those large factories—mostly foreign-owned, though some were domestic—should belong to the people and produce for the people's benefit; and so on. I could ask him ten or fifteen similar questions, and he would agree wholeheartedly: 'Yes, that would be excellent'.

Essentially, if all those large department stores and all the lucrative businesses that enriched only their privileged owners belonged to the people and were meant to enrich the people, would you agree? 'Yes, yes,' he would reply immediately. He agreed one hundred percent with each of those simple proposals. And then suddenly I would ask him: Would you agree with socialism? Answer: 'Socialism? No, no, no, not socialism'. Such were the prejudices... Not to mention communism, which was a much more terrifying word.

It was the revolutionary laws that contributed most to creating a socialist consciousness in our country, and it was that same people—initially illiterate or semi-literate, who had to start by teaching many of their children to read and write—who, out of pure love for freedom and a yearning for justice, overthrew the tyranny

and heroically carried out and defended the most profound social revolution in this hemisphere.

Just two years after the victory, in 1961, we managed to teach about a million people to read and write, with the support of young students who became teachers; they went to the countryside, to the mountains, to the most remote places, and there they taught even 80-year-olds to read and write. Follow-up courses were then held, and the necessary steps were taken in a relentless effort to achieve what we have today. A revolution can only be a child of culture and ideas.

No people become revolutionary by force. Those who sow ideas never need to repress the people. Weapons, in the hands of that same people, are for fighting against those from outside who try to snatch away their achievements.

Forgive me for speaking on this topic, because I did not come here to preach about socialism or communism—I do not want anyone to misunderstand me—nor did I come here to propose radical laws or anything of the sort; I was simply reflecting on lived experience, which showed us how much ideas are worth, how much faith in humanity is worth, how much trust in the people is worth—which is extremely important in an era when humanity faces such complicated and difficult times.

Of course, on January 1st of this year in Santiago de Cuba, it was only right to acknowledge, in a very special way, that the Revolution that had managed to endure for 40 years, that had managed to reach that anniversary without lowering its flags, without surrendering, was fundamentally the work of that people who were there—young people and mature men and women—who were educated by the Revolution and were capable of accomplishing that feat, writing pages of noble and well-deserved glory for our homeland and our brothers and sisters in the Americas.

Thanks to the efforts, we might say, of three generations of Cubans, that sort of miracle was wrought—in the face of the most powerful force, the greatest empire that has ever existed in human

history—that the small country would pass such a harsh test and emerge victorious.

We had even greater admiration for those compatriots who, over the past 10 years—or, to be precise, over the past 8 years—had been able to withstand the double blockade as the socialist camp collapsed, the USSR disintegrated, and that neighbour remained the sole superpower in a unipolar world, unrivalled in the political, economic, military, technological, and cultural spheres. I am not judging the culture; I am judging the immense power with which they seek to impose their culture on the rest of the world.

It could not defeat a united people, a people armed with just ideas, a people possessing a great political consciousness, because that is what we value most. We have resisted everything we have resisted, and we are prepared to resist for as long as it takes to resist, because of the seeds that had been sown over those decades, because of the ideas and the consciousness that developed during that time.

It was our best weapon and our main weapon, and it always will be, even in the nuclear age. And since I mention it, we even had experiences related to weapons of that type, because at a certain point, who knows how many bombs and how many nuclear missiles were aimed at our small island during the famous October Crisis of 1962. Even in the age of smart weapons, despite the fact that from time to time they miss and land 100 or 200 kilometres from the target they were aimed at, but with a certain level of precision, human intelligence will always be superior to any of those sophisticated weapons.

It becomes a matter of concepts regarding how to fight, the doctrine of our country's defence, which today feels stronger because it has had to refine those concepts, and we have come to the realization that in the end—an end for the invaders—the struggle would be hand-to-hand, man-to-man and woman-to-invader, whether man or woman.

A more difficult battle has had to be fought and will continue to be fought against that all-powerful empire; it is the ideological struggle that has been waged incessantly and which they intensified with all their resources much more so after the collapse of the socialist camp when we decided, firmly confident in our ideas, to move forward; moreover, to move forward alone; and when I say alone, I am referring to state entities, without ever forgetting the immense and invincible solidarity and support of the peoples who have always stood by us, and for that reason we feel all the more compelled to fight.

We have carried out honourable internationalist missions. More than 500,000 of our compatriots have participated in arduous and difficult missions of this nature—children of that people who could neither read nor write yet attained such a high level of consciousness as to be capable of shedding sweat and even their own blood for other peoples; in short, for any people in the world.

From the outset of the Special Period that was beginning, we said: ‘Our first internationalist duty at this moment is to defend this trench’—the trench of which Martí spoke in the last words he wrote on the eve of his death, when he said that silence had to be the fundamental objective of his struggle, because Martí was not only very ‘Martian,’ but was even more Bolivarian than Martian, and that objective he set for himself, in his own words, was ‘to prevent, in time, through the independence of Cuba, the United States from spreading throughout the Antilles and falling, with that added force, upon our lands of America. Everything I have done until today, and will do, is for that.’

It was his political testament, when he confessed the longing of his life: to prevent the fall of that first trench that our northern neighbours so often sought to occupy, and which still stands and will remain there, with a people willing to fight to the death to prevent that trench of the Americas from falling; a people who would be capable of defending even the last one, because whoever

defends the last trench and does not allow anyone to take it over has, from that very moment, begun to achieve victory .

Comrades—allow me to call you that—here at this moment that is what we are, and I believe that here, at this moment, we are also defending a trench, and trenches of ideas, forgive me for turning once again to Martí, as he said, are worth more than trenches of stone.

We must speak of ideas here, and I return to what I was saying: many things have happened in these 40 years; but the most momentous thing is that the world has changed. The world I am addressing you from today—you who were not yet born on that day, and many of whom were far from being born—is nothing like the one of that time.

I tried to find a newspaper to see if there was any mention of that event at the university. Fortunately, we do have the complete speech from the Plaza del Silencio. With that revolutionary fervour with which we had come down from the mountains just a few days earlier, we were talking about the liberation processes in Latin America and placing the main emphasis on the liberation of the Dominican people from the clutches of Trujillo. I believe that topic took up almost all the time, or a significant portion of the time, of that gathering, with enormous enthusiasm on everyone's part.

Today, here, we could not speak of a topic like that. The fact is, today there is no single people to liberate, today there is no single people to save; today there is a world, today there is a humanity to liberate and to save, and that is not our task—it is your task.

Back then there was no unipolar world, no single hegemonic superpower; today we have the world and humanity under the domination of an enormous superpower, and even so we are convinced that we will win the battle, not out of Panglossian optimism—I think that's a word writers sometimes use—but because one is certain that if one lets go of this notebook, in a matter of seconds it will fall; that if this table did not exist, this notebook would

be on the floor, and the table upon which that powerful superpower that rules the unipolar world sits is, objectively, disappearing .

These are objective reasons, and I am sure that humanity will provide all the indispensable subjective elements. To do so, what is needed are not nuclear weapons or great wars; what is needed are ideas. And I say this on behalf of that small country we mentioned earlier that has steadfastly sustained the struggle, without any hesitation, for 40 years.

You were saying, invoking—much to my embarrassment—the name by which I am known—I mean the name Fidel, because I really have no other title; I understand that protocol requires calling me His Excellency the President, and so on and so forth—, and when I heard you repeating that ‘Fidel, Fidel, what does Fidel have that the Americans can’t handle?’, then it occurred to me, and I turned to my neighbour on the right—I mean, geographically to the right, right?—some people over there are making gestures I don’t understand, but I said that here we’re all in the same combat unit —, and it occurred to me to say to him: Good grief! What you really should be asking is: What is it about the Americans that they can’t handle him? And if instead of ‘him’ they said: What is it about the Americans that they can’t handle Cuba?, that would be fairer. I know we have to use words to symbolize ideas. That’s how I’ve always understood it; I never claim nor can I claim such merits for myself.

Yes, we all have hope for the future—all of us! —in the ideas we fight for and with the conviction that those who come after us will be able to carry them out; although it must be—and this should not be hidden—that your task will be more difficult than the one that fell to us.

I was telling you that we are living in a very different world. That is the first thing we must understand; I was already explaining certain political characteristics. Furthermore, it is a globalized world, truly globalized, a world dominated by the ideology, norms, and principles of neoliberal globalization.

Globalization is not, in our view, anyone's whim; it is not even someone's invention. Globalization is a historical law; it is a consequence of the development of the productive forces—and forgive me for using that phrase, which may still frighten some because of its author—a product of the development of science and technology to such an extent that even the author of the phrase, Karl Marx, who had great confidence in human talent, was likely unable to imagine.

There are a few other things that remind me of the fundamental ideas of that thinker among great thinkers. It's just that the thought occurs to one that, among other things, what he conceived as an ideal for human society could never become a reality—and this is becoming increasingly clear—if it did not take place in a globalized world. It never even occurred to him for a second that on the tiny little island of Cuba—to cite an example—one could attempt to build a socialist society, or to build socialism, much less right next to such a powerful capitalist neighbour.

Well, yes, we have tried; more than that, we have done it and we have been able to defend it. And we have also endured 40 years of blockade, threats, aggression, and suffering.

Today, since we stand alone, all the propaganda and mass media—which the United States controls worldwide—are being directed by it in its political and ideological war against our revolutionary process, just as it employs its immense power in all fields, primarily the economic sphere, and its international political influence in its economic war against Cuba.

I always remember a phrase by Martí that has remained most deeply etched in my consciousness: 'All the glory of the world fits into a grain of corn.' Many of history's great men were concerned with glory, and that is no reason to criticize them. The concept of time, the sense of history, of the future, of the importance and survival of the events of one's life—and perhaps that is what they understood by glory—is natural and understandable. Bolívar liked to speak of glory and spoke very strongly of it, and

he cannot be criticized for it, because a great aura will always accompany his name.

Martí's concept of glory, which I fully share, is one that can be associated with personal vanity and self-aggrandizement. The role of the individual in major historical events has been much debated and even acknowledged. What I particularly like about Martí's phrase is the idea of the insignificance of man himself, in the face of the enormous significance and importance of humanity and the unfathomable magnitude of the universe—the reality that we are truly like a tiny speck of dust floating in space. Yet that reality does not diminish the greatness of man in the slightest; on the contrary, it elevates him when, as in the case of Bolívar, he carried within his mind an entire universe filled with just ideas and noble sentiments. That is why I admire Bolívar so much. That is why I consider his work so immense. He does not belong to the lineage of conquerors of territories and nations, nor to that of empire-builders who brought fame to others; he created nations, liberated territories, and dismantled empires. He was, moreover, a brilliant soldier, a distinguished thinker, and a prophet. Today we are trying to do what he wanted to do and has not yet been done: to unite our peoples so that tomorrow, following the same thread of that unifying thought—the only one that corresponds to our species and our era—human beings may come to know and live in a united, fraternal, just, and free world, which is what he sought to achieve with the peoples comprising the whites, blacks, Indigenous peoples, and mestizos of our America.

Here we are in this land for which we feel special admiration, respect, and affection. When I came 40 years ago, I expressed it this way with deep gratitude, because nowhere else was I received better, with such affection and enthusiasm. The only thing that might embarrass me is that I was actually in kindergarten when the first meeting took place at this prestigious university.

Having said that, I will now present as concisely as possible the reflection I wished to share regarding Venezuela.

Surely not everyone will agree with it. The main thing is that each of you analyze it with honesty, serenity, and objectivity.

In truth, the Soviets had sympathy for Cuba and great admiration for our Revolution; because for them, after so many years, seeing a small country right there, next to the United States, rise up against the powerful superpower was astonishing—something they never imagined and would never have advised anyone to do. Luckily, we didn't ask anyone for advice, although we had already read almost the entire library of books by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and other theorists; we were convinced Marxists and socialists.

With that fever and that enthusiasm that we young people usually have—and often even the old folks—I embraced the basic principles I learned from that literature, and they helped me understand the society in which I lived, which until then had been an intricate tangle to me, with no convincing explanation of any kind. And I must say that the famous *Communist Manifesto*, which took Marx and Engels so many months to draft—it's clear that its main author worked conscientiously, a phrase he used to say, and must have revised it more times than Balzac revised a single page of any of his novels—made a great impression on me, because for the first time in my life I saw a few truths I had never seen before.

Before that, I was a sort of utopian communist. Studying a massive tome, printed on mimeograph sheets, about 900 pages long—the first course in political economy taught to us at the Law School, a political economy inspired by the ideas of capitalism, but which briefly mentioned and analysed the various schools and criteria, and then in the second course, taking a keen interest in the subject and reflecting from rational points of view, I drew my own conclusions and ended up becoming a utopian communist. I describe it that way because it was not based on any scientific or historical foundation, but rather on the good intentions of that recent graduate of the Jesuit school, to whom I am very grateful because they taught me some things that helped me in life, above all, to have a certain strength, a certain sense of honour, and cer-

tain ethical principles, which they, Spanish Jesuits—though very far removed from the political and social ideas I may hold now—instilled in their students.

But from there I emerged as an athlete, an explorer, a mountain climber, and entered the University of Havana politically illiterate, without the good fortune of a revolutionary mentor, who would have been so useful to me at that stage of my life.

It was through these paths that I arrived at my ideas, which I hold and uphold with loyalty and growing fervour, perhaps because I have a little more experience and knowledge, and perhaps also because I have had the opportunity to reflect on new problems that did not even exist in Marx's time.

For example, the word 'environment' must never have been uttered by anyone in the entire lifetime of Karl Marx, except for Malthus, who said that the population was growing geometrically; that food would not be enough for so many, thus becoming a sort of precursor to the environmentalists, although he held views on economic matters and wages with which one cannot agree.

I'm wearing the same shirt I wore when I came to this university 40 years ago, the one we wore when we attacked the Moncada Barracks, the one we wore when we disembarked from the *Granma*. I would dare to say, despite the many pages of adventures that anyone can find in my revolutionary life, that I always tried to be wise but prudent; although perhaps I have been wiser than prudent.

In the conception and development of the Cuban Revolution, we acted as Martí said when speaking of the great anti-imperialist objective of his struggles, as he was about to die in combat: 'It has had to be done in silence and indirectly, because there are things that, to be achieved, must remain hidden; and if proclaimed for what they are, they would raise difficulties too formidable to overcome in order to reach the goal.'

I was discreet, though not as much as I should have been, because to everyone I met I began explaining Marx's ideas and

class society, so that in the popular movement—whose slogan in its fight against corruption was ‘Shame over money,’ and which I had joined shortly after arriving at the university—I was gaining a reputation as a communist. But by the final years of my studies, I was no longer a utopian communist, but rather an atypical communist, acting freely. I started from a realistic analysis of our country’s situation. It was the era of McCarthyism, of the almost total isolation of the Popular Socialist Party—the name held by the Marxist party in Cuba—and there was, instead, in the movement I had joined, now transformed into the Cuban People’s Party, a vast mass that, in my view, possessed class instinct, but no class consciousness—peasants, workers, professionals, middle-class people, good, honest, potentially revolutionary people. Its founder and leader, a man of great charisma, had taken his own life in a dramatic manner months before the 1952 coup d’état. Our movement was later nourished by the young ranks of that party.

I was active in that political organization, which was already—like all of them—falling into the hands of the wealthy, and I knew by heart everything that was going to happen after the now inevitable electoral victory; but I had also come up with some ideas on my own—imagine what a utopian might come up with—about what needed to be done in Cuba and how to do it, in spite of the United States. We had to lead those masses down a revolutionary path. Perhaps that was the merit of the tactics we followed. Of course, we carried around the books of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

When the attack on the Moncada Barracks took place, we lost a book by Lenin, and at the trial, the first thing the Batista regime’s propaganda claimed was that it was a conspiracy by corrupt ‘PRI members’ from the recently overthrown government, using those people’s money—and that they were also communists. It’s unclear how those two categories could be reconciled.

At the trial, what I did was take on my own defence. It’s not that I considered myself a good lawyer, but I believed that the best person to defend me at that moment was myself; I put on a robe

and took my place where the lawyers were. The trial was political, rather than criminal. I didn't intend to be acquitted, but to spread ideas. I began to interrogate all those criminals who had murdered dozens and dozens of comrades and were acting as witnesses; the trial was against them. So the next day they took me out of there, separated me, and declared me ill. That was the last thing they did, because they were quite eager to finish me off once and for all; but, well, I knew full well why they held back. I knew and I know what the psychology of all those people was, the mood, the popular sentiment, the rejection and the enormous outrage caused by their murders, and I also had a bit of luck; but the fact is that, in the early hours, while they were interrogating me, Lenin's book appeared—someone produced it: 'You had a book by Lenin.'

We explained who we were: followers of Martí—it was the truth—that we had nothing to do with that corrupt government they had ousted from power, that we had set ourselves such and such objectives. Of course, we didn't say a single word to them about Marxism-Leninism, nor did we have any reason to tell them anything. We said what we had to say, but when the book came up during the trial, I felt truly irritated in that moment, and I said: 'Yes, that book by Lenin is ours; we read the books by Lenin and other socialists, and anyone who doesn't read them is ignorant,' and I stated that to the judges and everyone else right there.

That was unbearable. We weren't going to say, 'Look, that little book—someone put it there.' No, no.

Later, our program was laid out when I defended myself at the trial. Anyone who didn't know how we thought did so because they didn't want to know how we thought. Perhaps they chose to ignore that speech known as 'History Will Absolve Me,' with which I defended myself alone there, because, as I explained, they expelled me, declared me ill, tried everyone else, and sent me to a hospital to be tried, in a small room; they didn't admit me to the hospital proper, but to an isolated prison cell. In the hospital, that tiny little room had been turned into a courtroom, with the

tribunal and a few people crammed in, almost all of them military, where they tried me, and I had the pleasure of being able to say there everything I thought, in full, quite defiantly.

I asked them, I told them, why they hadn't figured out what our thinking was, because it was all right there. It contained—one might say—the foundations of a socialist government program, although I was convinced, of course, that this wasn't the time to do it, that it would have its stages and its time. That's when we started talking about agrarian reform, and we discussed, among many other social and economic issues, that all surplus value—without mentioning that word, of course—the profits earned by all those gentlemen who had so much money, had to be dedicated to the country's development, and I implied that the government had to take responsibility for that development and those surplus funds.

I even spoke of the golden calf. I referred again to the Bible and pointed out: 'those who worshipped the golden calf,' in clear reference to those who expected everything from capitalism. Enough to deduce how we thought.

Later I reflected that it is likely that many of those who could have been affected by a true revolution did not believe us at all, because in 57 years of Yankee neocolonialism, more than one progressive or revolutionary program had been proclaimed; the ruling classes never believed in ours as something possible or permissible by the United States, nor did they pay it much attention; they accepted it, it even amused them; in the end, all the programs were abandoned, people became corrupt, and they probably said: 'It's very nice, very charming; yes, the illusions of these romantic young men—why should we pay any attention to that?'

They felt antipathy toward Batista, admired the head-on struggle against his abusive and corrupt regime, and possibly underestimated the thinking contained in that speech, which laid the foundations for what we later did and what we believe today—with the difference that many years of experience have further enriched

our knowledge and perceptions regarding all those issues. So that is my view; I've said it since back then.

We have lived through the harsh experience of a long revolutionary period, especially the last 10 years, facing extremely powerful forces under very difficult circumstances. Well, I'll tell you the truth: we achieved what seemed impossible to achieve. I would say that miracles were almost performed. Of course, the laws were exactly as promised; the opposition—always haughty and arrogant—from the United States, which had a great deal of influence in our country, erupted furiously, and the process became more radical with every blow and act of aggression we received; thus began the long struggle that has lasted until today. The forces in our country became polarized, fortunately with the vast majority supporting the Revolution, and a minority—perhaps 10 per cent or less—opposing it, so there was always a broad consensus and strong support throughout that entire process up to the present day.