

[Speech given by the President of the Republic of Cuba, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, at the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, May 26, 2003 \[1\]](#)

Date:

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Dear brothers and sisters, students, workers, and I would almost go so far as to say, fellow Argentines: (Applause)

I have lived a number of years, but I could have never even imagined an event as hazardous and unbelievably emotional as this one. (Applause and shouts)

I want you to know that at this very moment, millions of Cubans are also witnessing this spectacle. (Applause and shouts of: "Cuba, Cuba, Cuba, the people salute you!") On behalf of our people, I am infinitely grateful, because the strength that comes from ideas, from the truth and from a just cause is what makes the peoples invincible. (Applause)

According to what the students and university authorities told me, they had planned to hold some kind of meeting here in this law school, something modest. It would begin at 7:00 p.m., and it would be attended by a number of students sitting in a theater, and in case more happened to come, they would set up a screen outside, so that they could watch as well.

I could make a criticism –not aimed at you, but at our own comrades. I could tell them: "You underestimated the Argentinean people." (Applause) We were getting reports that the theater had filled up, that there were twice as many people as could be seated there, that there was no more room on the aisles, and the hallway was full, and the stairs were filling up. They said there were 1000 people, 2000, 3000. At one point the television stations began reporting what was happening here, and then, I saw some images –we have a certain habit of estimating the number of people in a crowd– and what we saw here looked like Revolution Square in Cuba. (Applause)

All communications and routes of access were cut off; luckily those little devices that are such a nuisance and make so much noise –I mean cellular phones– are useful at times like these, in order to communicate and stay informed of the situation.

Our ambassador, who is one of the guilty parties in this underestimation (Laughter) –I know that you will defend him, because he is very fond of the people of Argentina (Shouts)– was communicating with his family, who were inside the hall where the meeting would be held. There were even a few children there, because they believed that this was going to be the most peaceful of public events. And it is, isn't? No one could have imagined how well this crowd could be organized. But at that point, no one could move, everyone was stuck where they were, communicating by cell phone. There was no way to get in. They had declared that it was impossible to get in, but I could not resign myself to going back on my commitment. I could not allow the physical conditions of the place and the obstruction resulting from the huge crowds, to deprive me of the honor and the pride of meeting with you.

It had been said that it was impossible, but I continued to insist that nothing is impossible. (Applause) This was simply a problem that had to be solved, and I could not accept staying back there, waiting for

news. All my life I have been accustomed to moving around, to going wherever there may be difficulties, and I could not accept the idea of getting on that plane, at whatever time, without coming to this university.

Of course, I am a visitor here, and above all else, I must respect law and order. I have no right to do anything whatsoever that violates in the slightest the rules and orders of this country's authorities.

And I must say that, truly, the authorities cooperated to the fullest in helping to find a solution.

I continued to receive reports from the law school, and they continued to tell us, "No one is leaving the hall." They were advancing a bit along the sides, at one point something or other was broken somewhere. This is something else we are going to have to assume, either share the cost or pay ourselves for the damage that may have resulted from a broken window, a breach made by this patriotic and revolutionary army of Argentinians. (Applause)

So we talked to a young member of our delegation, the Foreign Minister, you saw and listened to him. I told him: "You go over there, get inside anyway you can, and speak with the people in that theater. You explain the situation to them, the fact that we might not be able to hold our meeting there." Because there was a justified fear that if the event took place there, and there were screens outside, some of the people who had voluntarily left the room might try to get back in. So, they had to be persuaded of the genuine need to move out to the stairs, and hold the event out there.

We were waiting impatiently, listening to our envoy through two means: by television, since some of the networks were broadcasting his words, and by cell phone. We watched and listened as he tried to persuade the people inside the hall to mover out here.

Once again we saw proof of the people's capacity to understand, to cooperate, to react, because just a few minutes later, he told me, "They're moving out towards the stairs."

But there was another obstacle to overcome, that of the television cameras and microphones. (Shouts) Listen, don't fight with the cameras now, and leave it until tomorrow, if you want. (He is told something.) Yes, I know, I know, I was listening, but they really wanted to report on what was happening here, so I cannot complain. They have to be here, because otherwise, you would be the only ones to know what is being said here.

For example, without the cameras, without all the equipment, our people would not be watching what is happening here at this moment, and that is what caused the hour of delay. Do you know how long an hour of impatience is? All of you and we have endured this long, endless and infinite hour of impatience, because all of this had to be set up, the microphones and loudspeakers, the equipment used by the press. Everything had been set up for the event to be held inside, and they really did manage to get everything moved out in record time.

We asked what was happening. It was 8:40 p.m., and they told us, "Everything is ready; it would be best if you got here quickly." Because it is the cold, as well. But the cold is nothing compared to the warmth of all of you here. (Applause)

They made me put this on, but I do not really need it. I am going to take it off, because I am ashamed to have this on here. (He takes off his coat.)

We left right away to be able to get here at more or less the time estimated. But the organizational feat achieved by the masses here was a miracle. (Applause) I will never forget what all of you did tonight, which will allow us to leave here happy and eternally grateful.

Some may think that this is perhaps vanity on our part, for the immense honors you have granted us. No, that is not what I am thinking about. When I speak of eternal gratitude, it is because the people of

Buenos Aires are sending a message to those who dream of bombing our country, our cities. (Applause and shouts of "Cuba, Cuba, Cuba, the people salute you!" and "Bush, you fascist, you are the terrorist!") You are sending a message to those who dream of destroying not only the Revolution, but also the people that carried out that Revolution, and that has succeeded in withstanding more than 40 years of blockade, aggressions and threats against our country. (Applause)

In such circumstances, you cannot calculate only the children who die, or the mothers who die, or the old people who die, or the young people and adults who die. There are times when the survivors are so mutilated and so devastated that you wonder, under those circumstances, if it would not be 100 times more preferable to die than to continue living that way, as a consequence of something that was undertaken for no real reason whatsoever, with no right or justification, something that violated the international standards, the international laws that we believed governed this world. Although many of us already suspected that this was a world in which the law was little respected, and that the principle was being established whereby force was the sole justification to commit any crimes, to subjugate our peoples, to conquer our natural resources, to impose what you spoke of, a worldwide Nazi-fascist dictatorship. (Booing)

This is not an exaggeration or an overstatement, as we all heard it said one day that 60 or more countries could be the targets of preemptive attacks. Never before in history had anyone, any empire, made such a threat. (Booing)

When there was talk of preparedness to strike against any dark corner of the world, I do not recall ever having heard such words before.

When it was said that every weapon of war could be used, whether nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons, aside from the highly-sophisticated weapons that are no longer conventional by any standard, because they can cause all manner of destruction, we thought to ourselves, What right does anyone have to threaten the peoples of the world?

I wonder if here, too, at this gathering, since there is not much light, we might need to turn on a lot more lights, so that we are not 'a dark corner of the world' to be attacked preemptively. (Applause)

Of course, this square, this stairway that we see here, is not a dark corner; it is a corner full of light, full of millions of lights. This square and this stairway are like a sun, like the sun that we saw when we arrived here and that we saw when we visited the statue of José Martí, to lay a wreath there. (Applause) (Someone in the audience says something to him.) Yes, but when we went to the statue of San Martín, it was a bit earlier, although the sun was already very strong. I thought, damn! Our sun is strong, and it is hot. And I thought, this sun is not as hot, I mean, the weather is cold, but the sun was super-radiant.

The sun looked very powerful. But here there are two suns at this moment: the sun we saw this morning and upon our arrival in this country, and the sun we are seeing now here in this stairway and this square. It is ideas that light up the world (Applause), it is ideas, and when I say ideas, I mean ideas that are just, ideas that can bring peace to the world, and put an end to the grave danger of war, or put an end to violence. That is why we talk about the battle of ideas.

I believe -because I am an optimist- that this world can be saved, in spite of the mistakes that have been made, in spite of the immense and unilateral powers that have been created, because I believe that ideas can prevail over force, (Applause) and this is what we are witnessing here.

I did not come here tonight with the intent of delivering a harangue. I rather felt it was my duty to be careful with every word. Of course, I was planning to speak primarily about our country and the world, and that is what I am doing, but I cannot do it without seeing all of you here, without feeling your presence here.

Now, initially, I was imagining that I would be in a quiet room, with everyone seated nicely, and I asked

myself, what should I speak about to the Argentinians? Giving a speech anywhere is always complicated, it is not easy, you need to avoid saying anything that can hurt someone's feelings or that might appear to be some sort of interference. And I do believe I have not said a single word that can be interpreted in any way as interference in the internal affairs of this hospitable country. But I asked myself, what should I talk about? I realized something: Most speakers tend to impose a subject on their audience; they plan ahead of time to speak about this issue or that. And so I had an idea: not to choose any subject, but rather to ask the students, whom I pictured sitting before me, to tell me what subjects they were interested in hearing about. I had planned for you to ask me about the subjects you were interested in, for you to impose the subject on me, instead of me choosing to talk about whatever I wanted. I thought this would be more democratic and fair.

That was what I was thinking before this earthquake, this tidal wave, this hurricane that has lit here, at this university, as the sun was setting. When I got here, I looked around to see if that strategy still might work, but I realized it was no longer possible. However, I think that somebody over there said... I heard a voice that told me, Talk about something... (He is asked to talk about Che) About the life of Che. (Applause)

I cannot speak at length here, it would not make sense under these circumstances, but I can say a few things. I have been asked to speak about Che. (Shouts) I spoke about him this morning in front of the statue of San Martín, because I will remember him always as one of the most extraordinary personalities I have ever met.

Che did not join up with our troop as a soldier; he was a doctor. He was in Mexico by chance. He had been to Guatemala, and had traveled through many places in the Americas. He had been in mining areas, where the work is very hard. He had even been in the Amazon, working as a doctor in a leper hospital.

But I will discuss one of Che's characteristics, one of those that I admired the most, of the many that I much admired. Every weekend, he tried to climb to the top of Popocatepetl, a volcano on the outskirts of Mexico City. He would get his gear together -it is a very high mountain, cap in snow year-round- start climbing, make a colossal effort, and never reach the top. His asthma always kept him from making it. The following week he would once again try to climb to the top of "Popo", as he called it, and would not make it. But he would keep going back to try again, and he would spent his entire life trying to climb the Popocatepetl, even if he never reached the peak. (Applause and shouts) This gives you an idea of his determination, his spiritual strength, his perseverance, which was one of the characteristics I most admired in him.

What was the other? The other was that whenever a volunteer was needed, back when we were still a very small group, to carry out a certain task, Che was always the first person to step forward. (Applause)

As a doctor, he stayed with the sick and wounded, because under certain circumstances, in the outdoors, when we were in forested mountain areas and being pursued from different directions, the main force would have to keep moving, leaving a visible trail so that the doctor could stay behind with the people he was caring for somewhere nearby. There was a time when he was the only doctor, until other doctors came forward to join us, so there he was.

Since you are asking for anecdotes, I remember an action that was extremely hazardous for everyone. News had reached the spot where we were gathered in the mountains of a landing on the north coast of the province. We recalled the ordeals and the suffering we went through in the first days after our own landing, and as an act of solidarity with those who had landed now, we decided to undertake a rather daring action. From a military point of view, it was not a wise decision: to attack a unit that was well entrenched on the coast.

I will not go into the details. As a result of that battle, which lasted three hours, and we were really quite lucky, because we had managed to cut off communications, but after three hours, at the end of that

battle where, as usually, he had shown exemplary conduct, a third of the participants in the fighting were either dead or wounded. This was highly unusual. And so he, as a doctor, attended to the enemy's wounded. There were enemy soldiers who were not wounded, but there were also a large number who were wounded and he attended to them, along with our own comrades. (Applause)

You cannot imagine the sensitivity of that man! (Applause) There is something I remember: one of our comrades was fatally wounded, and he knew it. We had to get out of the area quickly, immediately, because we did not know when the first planes would start to arrive. Miraculously, none had showed during the battle because the first ones usually arrived within 20 minutes, but luckily we had managed to wipe out their communications with a few well-aimed shots. We had gained some extra time, but we needed to attend to the wounded and withdraw right away. And I will never forget --he told me about it later-- when one of our comrades was inevitably going to die... he could not be moved. Sometimes when men are seriously wounded, they cannot be moved, and you simply have to trust --since you have treated the enemy's wounded, and have taken a number of prisoners, prisoners whom we always treated with respect; there was never a single case, ever, of a prisoner taken in combat being mistreated or executed. (Applause) We sometimes even gave them our own medicines, which were extremely scarce.

This policy, truly, contributed a great deal to our success in the war, because in any struggle, you must earn the respect of the enemy. (Applause) In any struggle --I will repeat it again -- those who defend a good cause must behave in such a way as would allow them to earn the respect of the enemy.

On that occasion, we had to leave behind a number of wounded comrades who could not be evacuated, and some were very seriously wounded. But what was most striking for me was when he told me later, with great sorrow, was that moment when he realized that this one comrade had no hope of surviving, and he bent down and kissed him on the forehead, this wounded comrade whom he knew would inevitably die. (Applause)

These are some of the things I can tell you about Che as a man, as an extraordinary human being.

He was, as well, an extraordinarily cultured man, a man of great talent. I have already spoken of his persistence, his determination. Any task assigned to him, after the triumph Revolution, he was more than willing to accept. He was the director of the National Bank of Cuba, where a revolutionary was needed at that moment; and at any other moment, of course, but the Revolution had just triumphed, and its resources were very scant, since the country's reserves had been stolen.

Our enemies joked about it; they always make jokes, and we make jokes as well. According to this particular joke, which had a political intent, I announced one day, "We need an economist," and Che raised his hand, but it turned out that he had been confused, he thought I had said that we needed a communist, and that is why he ended up being chosen. (Applause) Well, Che was a revolutionary, a communist, and an excellent economist. (Applause) Because being an excellent economist depends on the idea of what should be done by the person in charge of this sphere of the country's economy, the National Bank of Cuba, and he did it as both a communist and an economist. It is not that he had a degree, but rather that he had read a lot and observed a lot.

It was Che who promoted the idea of voluntary work in our country, because he himself went out to do voluntary work every Sunday. One day he would do farm work, another day he would test out new machinery, another day he would do construction work. He left us this legacy of a practice that millions of Cubans came to adopt, following his example.

He left us so many memories, and that is why I say that he is one of the most noble, most extraordinary, and most selfless people I have ever met. And this would be of no significance if I did not believe that there are millions and millions and millions of people like him among the masses. (Applause)

A man who is uniquely outstanding would not be able to achieve anything if there were not many

millions of others like him, capable of developing these same qualities. That is why our Revolution has made such concerted efforts to fight illiteracy and promote education. (Applause)

While I said earlier that ideas are more powerful than weapons, education is the ultimate instrument through which these beings known as humans, who are powerfully governed by instincts or natural laws, and have evolved, as Darwin demonstrated, and nobody denies this today... I am referring to the theory of evolution, and I said that nobody denies it, because I remember the moment when Pope John Paul II stated that the theory of evolution was not incompatible with the doctrine of creation. And I truly feel great appreciation for actions like this, because this put an end to a contradiction between a scientific theory and a religious belief. But these human beings can be like animals in the jungle, if they are left in the jungle. They are intelligent beings, we know what is inside the human skull, and we even know that humans are the only living beings whose brains continue to grow two and a half years after birth. You know this, you are university students, and you must have read it somewhere. This has a tremendous influence on the development of intelligence.

If children are not provided with all of the required nutrients up until two and a half years of age, they will reach the age of six and begin school with a diminished intelligence in comparison with children who receive adequate nutrition. (Applause) And I must say that one of the most essential things, if we advocate equality, is the right to reach the age of six with the mental capacity with which a child is born. We know that those who do not receive adequate nutrition at this early age –and they number in the hundreds of millions around the world– reach school age –if there are schools, if there are teachers able to educate them– with less possibilities for learning. Although there are also cases where they receive adequate nutrition during this stage, but then there are no schools or teachers for them later. (Applause)

But, what happens in the poorest sectors of the planet, basically concentrated in the Third World countries, where four-fifths of the human species live? It is in these regions that the poor are concentrated and the hungry, those who cannot achieve this level of installed capacity --not developed capacity-- those who do not even have schools.

If they tell you that there are 860 million illiterate adults in the world, they immediately explain that almost 90% of those 860 million illiterate adults live in the Third World. It should be added that there is also illiteracy in highly developed countries. Our great neighbor to the north has millions of illiterates (Whistling and booing), totally illiterate people, but also tens of millions of functionally illiterates. And nobody takes this... (Shouts of: "A doctor.") What's that, a doctor, what about a doctor? (He is told something.)

I said tens of millions, but there are actually hundreds of millions. Well, no, not in the developed countries, I mean the countries of the Third World.

(He is told that they are asking for a doctor, for someone in the audience.) A doctor? There is a doctor here. Where do they need a doctor? Get the person out, quickly; we will have a doctor, right away.

I was telling you –and I am talking longer than I had wished– about two very important issues, which are very closely linked. They are education and healthcare. We were talking about an Argentinian doctor who became a soldier without ceasing to be a doctor for a single minute, which was what led us to address these things. And then I was saying that it is education that transforms the little animal into a human being. Do not ever forget this. (Applause) It is education that makes it possible to overcome natural instincts.

Furthermore, it is education that could empty out the jails filled with those who never received an education, those who did not receive adequate nutrition. Because even in our own country, we took a long time to realize that no matter how many laws are adopted, no matter how many schools are built, no matter how many teachers are trained, there will always be, for one reason or another, a great deal more to do for the education of human beings. In our society, because there are hundreds of thousands

of university-educated professionals and intellectuals, the influence of the family unit is decisive.

If you go to a prison and study the young people between the ages of 20 and 30 who are incarcerated, you will find that they come from the most humble and poorest sectors of the population. (Applause) They come from what we could call marginal areas. On the other hand, when you look at the social make-up of the schools that are highly competitive, where enrollment is determined by performance and grades, you will find the opposite, that the vast majority are children of intellectuals or artists.

Note that I am not talking about class differences from an economic point of view. The problem of building a new society is much more difficult than it may seem, because there are many things that you discover along the way. If you begin by fighting against an illiteracy rate of 30%, or a combined total and functional illiteracy rate of 90%, you focus your attention on these tasks, and when the years have passed, and you get into more in-depth studies of society, that is when you begin to realize the influence of education.

I can tell you that in the poorest sectors, in the marginal areas, where the breakup of the family unit is more frequent, this breakup has a significantly adverse influence. For instance, you can see that 70% are from broken homes, and up to 19% live with neither their mother nor their father, but with some other relative responsible for taking care of them. And when this same phenomenon occurs in a family of intellectuals, you do not see the same impact on children, even though they come from a broken home. Normally, they stay with the father or the mother; in our country, traditionally, they stay with the mother, and women make up 65% of the trained workforce in Cuba. (Applause) It is just like I am saying; a little bit more than 65%, and you see these phenomena. What could explain this, if not education? In other words, the educational level of parents, even when a revolution has taken place, continues to have a tremendous influence on the ultimate fate of their children.

It is also quite possible, under certain circumstances, in which the children of the most humble sectors, or with the least knowledge, and I am not talking here about the economic situation of the household, but rather the educational level, which tends to be perpetuated throughout decades, and one could say then, as we have sometimes said: These people who are doing this job or providing these services, their children will never be presidents of a company, or managers, or take up senior positions; they will end up, mostly, in prison.

We have studied this, and quite a few more things, but this is not the time to get into them. I am saying this only to point out that without an educational revolution, a truly profound educational revolution, injustice and inequality will continue to prevail, even when all of the material needs of the country's citizens have been satisfied. (Applause)

In our country, we guarantee a liter of milk a day for every child up until the age of seven. (Applause) For those who are older, due to limited our resources, we guarantee the supply of another dairy product, because fortunately it is possible to do so.

Now, we guarantee this milk for every child at a cost of less than one cent of a U.S. dollar. (Applause) One dollar sent by someone living in the North to a friend in Cuba can purchase 104 days' worth of milk. (Applause)

In our country, we were forced by the blockade to adopt a ration system, a blockade that has now lasted 44 years (Whistling); but in our country, you will not find a single child without a school, not a single one. (Applause)

In our country, in fact, children who are born with some sort of mental disability –and this is something we are studying in depth, the causes that lead to different types of mental retardation, whether slight, moderate, severe or profound, each with its own characteristics; fortunately, the slight and moderate cases are more numerous– at this moment, we have every case recorded, and not only the children, but also the slightly more than 140,000 people with some form of mental retardation. All children with some

type of physical or mental disability, or who are blind, or deaf-mute, or something even more terrible, blind and deaf-mute at the same time, they are all registered.

There are all sorts of human tragedies, and in order to learn more about them they must be studied and researched. We did not know anything about them at the beginning. It was throughout the years of practice and of fighting for education, as we have fought, that we gradually discovered these things.

They have special schools; there are 55,000 children enrolled in special education schools.

We have said that it is not enough for a child to simply attend a special education school from sixth to ninth grade. We think that if there are children who cannot move on to senior high school up to 12th grade, or to a technological school for vocational training, then they should complete the ninth grade, even if it takes a year or two longer, and leave prepared to carry out the kind of work they can do, and also be provided with a job. (Applause)

We must not underestimate the kids who have these kinds of problems; they have aptitudes for many different things. And we no longer simply resign ourselves, because we would be remiss in our duties if we limited ourselves to teaching them what can be taught to a child with these kinds of limitations, slight and moderate, for the most part.

They are all attended to, no matter what kind of disability they have. We have the satisfaction of knowing that, despite the blockade dating back 44 years, there is not a single child in Cuba in need of special education that does not have a school. (Applause)

I want to add something, and I do not want anyone to take it as a sign of vanity on the part of our people, because whenever I talk about we have done for education and healthcare, we actually feel ashamed as we discover more and more new possibilities, ashamed that we did not discover them before. Let no one think that Cuba boasts of its success. There are things that even we were not aware of.

We were comparing the statistics from a UNESCO study on education, and in our country, students in fourth and fifth grade of grammar school have almost twice the knowledge in language skills and mathematics as children of the same age in the rest of Latin America, and not just Latin America but the United States as well. (Applause)

I know that I am speaking in a country with high levels of education and culture; I know what the Argentinian people are like, and their knowledge. Our country has the highest levels today, but Argentina is among the other four or five countries that come close to our country's levels, although at a relatively long distance. But what really struck us was when we discovered that our grammar school children, and their command of language and mathematics, are above even the most developed countries in the world. (Applause)

And so today, our country occupies this position. At the same time, the infant mortality rate in our country is below seven per 1000 live births during the first year of life; last year it was 6.5, the year before it was 6.2, and we plan to lower it even further. We did not even know if it was possible to reduce infant mortality to these levels in a tropical country, because there are many factors involved: the climate has an influence, and even the genetic potential of each population has an influence, all of these elements in addition to others like healthcare, nutrition, etc. We did not know if it could be lowered to less than 10, and so we were very much encouraged when we achieved this.

You should not think that the best rates are found in the capital. There are entire provinces with infant mortality rates of less than five, and the rate is more or less even across the country. It is not like what happens in our Northern neighbor, where some areas, inhabited by people with more resources, better medical care and better nutrition, etc., etc., many have rates of four or five, while in other areas, like the capital of the United States itself, where there are a lot of poor people and ethnic groups like African-

Americans who do not have access to adequate medical care, and where infant mortality rates can be three times, four times, even five times higher than in places where all the necessary services are provided. (Applause)

We are familiar with the situation of Hispanic-Americans and African-Americans, and those from other parts of the world, their infant mortality rates, their life expectancy rates, their health indicators, just as we know that there are more than 40 million people in the United States who have no medical insurance.

When I speak of the people of the United States, I do not speak of them with hatred, because our Revolution has not taught hatred; it is based on ideas, and not on fanaticism or chauvinism. (Applause and shouts.) We have had the privilege of learning that we are all brothers and sisters, and our people are educated in the sentiments of friendship and solidarity, which we qualify as internationalist sentiments. (Applause and shouts)

Hundreds of thousands of our fellow Cubans have been through this school, and that is why I can say that it is not so easy to liquidate the Revolution, it is not so easy to crush the will of these people, by virtue of the ideas, concepts and sentiments that have been cultivated, because both ideas and sentiments must be cultivated, and this truth is the basis for everything we do. And a people that has attained certain levels of knowledge, a certain capacity to understand issues and a capacity for unity and discipline, is not so easy to wipe off the face of the Earth. (Applause and shouts) That is why, despite those Nazi-fascist theories, we have the conviction that an attack on our country would carry a very high price, as I have said, because this is a people that will never surrender, that will never give up the fight. (Applause and shouts) And as long as there is still a single man or woman capable of fighting, that man or woman will continue to fight.

Because we have come to know this enemy over many decades, our country has had to learn to defend itself. Our country does not drop bombs on other countries, or send thousands of planes to bomb cities; our country has neither nuclear weapons, nor chemical weapons, nor biological weapons. (Applause and shouts) The tens of thousands of scientists and doctors in our country have been educated in the philosophy of saving lives. (Applause) It would be totally contradictory to their formation to ask a scientist or a doctor to work producing substances, bacteria or viruses capable of causing the death of other human beings.

There were allegations that Cuba was doing research on biological weapons. In our country, research is done to cure terrible diseases like meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis, through vaccines produced with genetic engineering techniques, or, something of utmost importance, to search for vaccines or treatments through molecular immunology – forgive me for using such technical language, it means through methods that directly attack malignant cells. Some can prevent disease, others can actually cure them, and we are making progress in these areas. It is a source of pride for our doctors and our research centers.

Tens of thousands of Cuban doctors have offered their services on internationalist missions in the most remote and inhospitable places on the planet. I once said that our country could not and would not ever launch preemptive attacks against any dark corner of the world. On the other hand, our country has sent badly needed doctors to the darkest corners of the world. (Applause and shouts) Doctors and not bombs, doctors and not intelligent weapons, or rather, highly accurate weapons, because in the end, a weapon that treacherously kills is not by any means an intelligent weapon. (Applause and shouts of "Ole, ole, ole, Fidel, Fidel!")

As you see, my words to you, the students, have been on these issues, which we feel are the greatest source of pride for the Revolution.

There are those who say that in Cuba, the Revolution has done a very good job in terms of education –they admit that at least– and in healthcare –they admit that at least– and that sports have been very

well developed. And I know that you are big sports fans, and that "Ole, ole" I keep hearing comes from a certain sport (Laughter) in which you have been champions, sharing that honor with the Brazilians. (Shouts of "Ole, ole, Fidel, Fidel!") But they will also have to say, and they should say it fairly soon, that Cuba is rapidly advancing in the areas of culture and the arts. (Applause) And we are not only pursuing artistic culture, we are pursuing comprehensive general culture and knowledge.

I can share some little known news with you: in our country, in the last three years, universities have not merely increased in number, from the small number there once were... There was only one medical school, and today there are 22 medical schools, and one of them is called the Latin American School of Medical Sciences (Applause) where there are around 7000 students from all the countries of Latin America and there will eventually be 10,000 students. (Applause) And we know that in the United States, a university education, particularly medical school, costs at least 200,000 dollars. (Shouts)

When 10,000 students have completed their training at this school, which was founded several years ago, then in this field alone, our country will be providing cooperation to Third World countries worth the equivalent to two billion dollars. This is proof that if a country is guided by just ideas, even if it is a poor country, very poor, it can do many things. (Applause)

This is the country that has been blockaded for 44 years. This is the country against which, after the fall of the socialist bloc, our primary trade partners and suppliers -through purchasing and trading- imperialism stepped up its economic measures even further with the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts. (Hissing and booing)

There is, in addition, a criminal law which we call the murderous Cuban Adjustment Act, applicable to a single country in the world: Cuba. If someone who would never be granted a visa, because of a criminal record or for any other reason, were to manage to get there by stealing a boat or stealing a plane or through any other means, that person is automatically granted residence in the United States, and is even authorized to work the very next day.

Listen carefully: on the border between Mexico and the United States, around 500 people die every year, and they die horrible deaths, because a treaty was proposed to Mexico, or imposed on Mexico, whatever, called the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA. This agreement permits the free movement of goods and capital, but not the free movement of human beings. (Applause) And in the meantime, they apply this Adjustment Act to our country. We would not ask them to extend this law to the rest, because it is a murderous law. But we do maintain that those who accuse everyone else of violating human rights, something that, in the case of Cuba, they can only do on the basis of outrageous slander and shameful and ridiculous lies, should grant all human beings these rights. Hundreds of Mexicans and Latin Americans die there on that border, where every year more human beings die than all those who died throughout the entire 29 years of the existence of the Berlin Wall. (Applause)

They have talked about the Berlin Wall millions and millions of times, but there is never any news, or only very sporadically, about the Mexicans who die every year trying to cross the border.

Now, if you are Latin American or Asian or from any other country and arrive there illegally and stay, or are allowed to stay, you are called a refugee, or an immigrant. If you are Cuban, you are called an exile.

In the United States there are no Cuban immigrants, despite the fact that 100,000 of them come to visit their relatives in Cuba every year, but they are not immigrants, they are exiles. This is the word coined through their treacherous methods of sowing confusion and lies.

I can assure you that if this law that they have applied to us for 37 years had been applied to all of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, the ones on whom they want to impose an FTAA (Shouts), if they had granted these prerogatives to all of them - and I repeat, we do not advocate this, because it is a murderous law, it is for those who arrive in the country illegally- I can assure you that today there would not be 534 million inhabitants in all of Latin America and the Caribbean, and quite certainly, more

than half of the people in the United States would be of Latin American or Caribbean origins. (Applause) (Someone in the audience says something to him.) It must be said, but without using the word. It is better to let people deduce it than to say it; let them reason out what those who lead that country really are, the leaders of the country, not the people, who are very often deceived.

We have evidence that on many occasions they have supported bad causes, but in order to get them to support a bad cause, they must first be deceived, and they are experts on deception, and have been throughout history (Applause). But when they learn the truth, and let us remember Viet Nam when the American people played a decisive role in ending the war in Viet Nam. Because for the leaders of that country, international public opinion, your opinion, the opinion of all Latin Americans, is practically inconsequential. For them, it is the opinion of the U.S. voters that counts. There may be fraud, little frauds or huge mega-frauds, like what we saw in the last "super-democratic" elections in the United States, where the opposition candidate received half a million more votes than the candidate who "won".

Everyone knows exactly what happened there, and no one in the United States has any doubt: the extreme right ring, supported by the Cuban-American terrorist mob, through fraudulent means, stole the victory from his opponent. I will not get mixed up in saying which was more democratic and which was less democratic, because I am not a member of either of the two parties, and ultimately, you could say that what they have there is a one-party system. (Applause)

Some will say, "But don't they have a single party in Cuba?" I say, yes, but our Party neither nominates nor elects. The people, in assemblies held in each district, propose the district delegates, who form the basis of our system. (Applause) There cannot be less than two or more than eight. And almost 50% of those district delegates, who make up the Municipal Assembly in each municipality in the country, and are nominated and elected by the people, in elections where they must receive more than 50% of the votes --the National Assembly of Cuba, with just over 600 delegates, is almost 50% comprised of these district delegates, who not only constitute the Municipal Assemblies, but also nominate the candidates for the Provincial Assemblies and the National Assembly.

I will not go on any further, but I really would like it if one day you could learn a bit more about the electoral system in Cuba. Because it really is amazing when people from the North ask us when there are going to be elections in Cuba. We, Cubans, could ask them another question, like: Why do you have to be a multimillionaire to become the president of the United States? (Shouts), But then, the candidate does not necessarily have to be a multimillionaire, so we could ask: How many billions of dollars a candidate needs to be elected president, and how much do you need to pay for any position, including a modest municipal office?

In our country this does not happen and could not happen. Walls are not plastered with posters; the television waves are not inundated with subliminal messages. I believe that is what they are called; you lawyers --I forget that I was once one too-- might know. (Laughter)

What role have the mass media unfortunately played in that country and many other parts of the world? And I am not attacking them.

I will mention a case that demonstrates how the people of the United States, when they know the truth, can support a good cause: the case of little Elián González, kidnapped three and a half years ago. This little boy came home when the people there learned the truth, and more than 80% of the U.S. public was in favor of sending him back to Cuba. (Applause)

It is true that at the time of the Viet Nam War, the American people not only came to learn the truth, but there was another influential factor: the many young men coming home dead, after having been drafted to fight. In the case of Elián, there was nothing like this. We managed to get the people of the United States to understand our reasons, and it was done through the television networks, because a march of 600,000 mothers, like the one that took place in Havana, is an astonishing spectacle. Or a march of

hundreds of thousands of children, or a million people marching past the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, or millions of people demonstrating simultaneously in many different places, and all of these actions were broadcast by the big television networks around the world. There were rallies, like the one commemorating the 25th anniversary of the sabotage of a Cubana Airliner, blown up in mid-flight in an act of terrorism, that were broadcast by 40 international networks.

Today, there are ways to get messages across. There are satellites that can beam signals down. There is –and you students know this better than anyone– the Internet, which makes it possible to send a message to any corner of the world, even if it is not dark, because, really, in general, those who have Internet access also have electricity and other possibilities of communicating. But we must not underestimate the intelligentsia, made up by tens and tens of millions around the world, who are not necessarily an exploitative and wealthy class.

Remember, for example, what happened in Seattle; remember Quebec City; remember the protests that now take place in any part of the world. Educated and knowledgeable people have organized them through the Internet. And there are many things threatening the life of the planet today, aside from war, like climate changes, the destruction of the ozone layer, global warming, the poisoning of the air, the rivers and the seas. These things threaten the life of the entire planet, thus all of the peoples have a common cause with the people of Latin America, North America and Europe.

There is one catastrophe after another. Today, there are diseases that did not exist 25 or 30 years ago. AIDS did not exist 25 years ago, and those who have the best laboratories are concentrating on treatment, not prevention, not vaccines, because a treatment –and everyone knows this– that is sold for 10,000 dollars a year and has to be repeated every year is much more profitable. Quite simply, therapeutic medicine is much more profitable than preventive medicine. (Applause)

Now we have the sudden emergence of SARS; and the West Nile fever, which came from the northeastern United States, evidently, brought there from some other part of the world. And then there is the infamous dengue, which we hear so much about, which has four different strains, and the combination of some lead to complicated diseases like dengue hemorrhagic fever.

I am telling you this on behalf of a country that has experienced in the flesh the use of viruses and bacteria to attack our agricultural sector, and even our population. I can assure you, and this is no exaggeration, since I would not have an ounce of integrity if I were to tell you so much as a single lie. We know some things, and we have proof of almost all of them, we talk about these matters because we know. (Applause)

But as I was saying, today there are ways of communicating around the world, which make us less victims of or dependent on the mass media, because today, with this Internet network spreading around the world, all those who have a dream, an aspiration, a cause that troubles them, who are not thinking fundamentally of themselves, but rather of their children, all of them can make common cause, whether they live in underdeveloped or wealthy countries. Because these are truly new problems.

We must meditate on the huge number of new problems that have been emerging around the world, aside from the threat of war and the use of those brutal and barbaric weapons, in an era of history in which humankind has still not demonstrated the capacity to survive, and could be destroyed ten times over by a single power, on the basis of its technological monopoly and weapons that could wipe out all the other states in the world.

A growing number of people, millions and millions, are learning about all these problems, and it is in the centers of education, in the universities, that one gains the necessary knowledge to recognize what the world is today, and what the IMF is, and what the World Bank is, and what a debt of 800 billion dollars in Latin America means. (Applause)

When I had the honor of visiting Buenos Aires, something unforgettable for me, especially now that I

have returned, although I always remembered it, Latin America's debt was five billion dollars. Today, it is 160 times greater. In the past, national budgets were devoted, more or less, to schools and hospitals. The people of Argentina know this very well, because we have heard about Argentina for a long time; we know the levels it attained in education and healthcare and other things. But I will not speak about this concrete case; I have only mentioned these things because, truly, you achieved very high levels, this is well known, just as it is well known that there are two head of cattle –I am not counting the rest– per capita in this country. The levels of social development achieved are very significant.

But the world in which we live today, I repeat, is very different. There are many problems that the great political and social thinkers could not have predicted, at such a long distance, although their knowledge was decisive in making us people with revolutionary ideas. We cannot forget this fact.

In our country, we began with the universities. There was a time when computer sciences were not taught in our universities, and we have developed it little by little. Then we opened 170 Youth Computer Clubs, and just a short time ago we almost doubled the number to 300, with twice the number of computers. But what is most essential is that in our country today, 100% of children, from kindergarten to the university level, have computer labs in their schools, and we have discovered the enormous possibilities this opens up. (Applause) And now we are extending it massively, and we are working intensively on other things, which we do not talk about very much, but programmers are being trained by the tens of thousands.

To those who say that Cuba has done very well in this thing and the other, the things that I mentioned, and culture, which I also mentioned, to them we can say that today, university campuses are spreading to all the municipalities of our country, at a time when 800,000 Cubans are university graduates or intellectuals. (Applause) This means that today there are two university graduates for every sixth-grade graduate at the time of the triumph of the Revolution. (Applause) We are developing a society in which knowledge and culture are spread throughout the masses, and where we will achieve the dream of extending this knowledge and culture to every sector. (Applause) They will be extended to everyone in every sugar mill, in every municipality, because there are enough economists there; even if it is necessary for someone to go to teach classes in economics in one of the centers being developed, or classes in any of the areas of the humanities, or classes in technical subjects, like mechanical engineering, and many others. One exception could be the case of medicine, since medical schools are usually next to hospitals, and from the third year onwards, students are in constant contact not only with theory, but also with practice. (Applause)

Why have these programs spread with such speed? Because while looking, in fact, for the causes of certain social problems, we saw that there were a large number of young people, between the ages of 17 and 30, with a ninth-grade education, who were neither in school nor working. So, we looked into the reasons, spoke with every one of them, and this led to the immediate creation of comprehensive upgrading schools for these youngsters. The first year, 85,000 enrolled, and now in the second year, which is currently underway, there are 110,000 students. (Applause) And what would you say if I told you that for the next school year, which begins in September, 35,000 of these young people will begin university studies? (Applause)

What did we do? What did we use? In every municipality and every sugar mill, for example, there are junior high schools and sometimes vocational schools and senior high schools. These are regular schools, not boarding schools, and classes finish at 4:30 p.m. And they all have computer labs and audiovisual equipment. So classes began to be offered between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. in these same facilities, for the comprehensive upgrading courses for young people. The classes are taught by new teachers, or teachers who were already giving classes, or teachers who had retired, and with the help of these resources, they can work miracles, I assure you.

These young people are paid an allowance for studying. (Applause) Through this program, we have made study a form of employment.

The thing is, quite often people do not realize that, even if a person is poor, that person has somewhere to live, although it may be a one-room apartment, and he or she can use a bus for transportation. In our case, social security is guaranteed to everyone. In our case, 85% of people own their own homes (Applause) and do not pay property taxes on those homes. (Applause) Listen carefully, I want to clarify that I am not recommending anything, I simply want to explain what we are doing, and why we are surviving, and why the people support the revolutionary cause en masse.

Electricity costs half of a cent of a U.S. dollar a kilowatt; a certain amount of essential foodstuffs are provided at very low prices, in the ration stores. For example, the amount of rice allotted through the monthly ration is sold at a price of 25 Cuban cents a pound. At the current exchange rate of 26 Cuban pesos to a U.S. dollar, this means that one dollar converted to pesos can buy 105 pounds of rice. (Applause) There are other stores in which products are sold at higher prices, and the prices depend on whether they are luxuries or essential goods.

In our country, medicines cost half of what they cost 44 years ago, because the prices of these generic drugs were cut in half back then, and those same prices are maintained today.

I will repeat, once again, that I am only telling you these things as a manner of explanation.

Medical care is of increasingly better quality, because we are making great efforts in this area, and it is free for all citizens, with no distinctions, whether they need open-heart surgery or treatment for a cold or flu.

Education, which is also increasingly improving in quality, is absolutely free, from kindergarten to a doctorate degree; it does not cost our citizens a penny. (Applause) And this is one of the things that give our people a great sense of tranquillity. Now, we are moving forward to a society where culture and education outreach to the masses, and in the future our country will live basically from intellectual production.

While nature did not give us a lot of other resources, we had the privilege of a Revolution we were obliged to undertake by a very powerful neighbor, although we cannot really blame anyone for the latter, except maybe Christopher Columbus, who discovered us and brought us civilization, as you know. Although for you, the people of Argentina, it would not be as easy as it is for the Republic of Haiti to understand what colonization really means. But we will not get into that. It is a product of history.

We all know, of course, that many pilgrims went there, emigrating for religious reasons, and they brought with them a religious ethic. It is to this that I attribute the idealism that tends to characterize Americans, and the fact that if you manage to show them the truth, they will support a just cause. We must not forget about them, because they are just as endangered as we are by all of the environmental disasters and other threats I mentioned. We have many things in common with them, and they are fully convinced, and have reason be fully convinced, that those who lead them do not care in the slightest about the environment or climate changes.

I really wonder how on earth such a powerful country, which accounts for 25% of the world's energy consumption and produces the largest amounts of carbon dioxide and other pollutant gases, has pulled out of the Kyoto Agreement. You can be certain that tens of millions of people in the United States have the same concerns as you and everyone else do with regard to all these problems.

I was saying: Yes, we have a very powerful neighbor, but we have been fortunate to be able to continue developing, cultivating our people's talents on a massive scale.

At this point already in our country, 100% of children complete sixth grade, and just over 99% complete ninth grade. Now we are entering into a stage of massive educational development, using audiovisual resources, and using them exhaustively, but not in order to spread poison, or for people to let others think for them. I have already said that if children are not given the proper nutrition, they will not

develop the intelligence they came into the world with, their potential intelligence. But if certain resources are used incorrectly, they take away your freedom to think for yourself, because others think for you, and tell you what color to wear, or whether your skirts should be short or long, or which fabric is fashionable. They send us the message from over there about what we should buy, which soft drink we have to consume, which beer, which brand of whiskey or rum. As for us, we have historically been tobacco producers, and this is something we cannot give up, much less while we are subjected to the blockade, and yet when we give a friend a box of cigars as a gift, we say, "If you smoke, you can smoke them; if you have any friends who smoke, you can share them; but the best thing you can do with this box of cigars is to give them to your enemy." (Applause)

Cuba is a producer and exporter of tobacco, and is waging an anti-smoking campaign; Cuba is a producer of rum of a certain quality –I say this to show due modesty. Now they have stolen a brand name from us, but it does not matter, they cannot make Cuban rum. I am not recommending it, but if someone were to want to try it... What I recommend to pregnant women is that they should not drink it; they should not drink alcohol of any kind. We know this because we are studying the causes of each and every case of mental retardation, and we know the damage that alcohol can do when a woman is pregnant, it is one of the causes identified.

But, well, the country will not live in a consumer society; the consumer society is one of the most evil inventions of developed capitalism, and today in the phase of neoliberal globalization. It is terrifying to imagine 1.3 billion people in China with the same level of car ownership as in the United States.

I cannot imagine India, with one billion inhabitants, living in a consumer society. I cannot imagine the 520 million people who live in sub-Saharan Africa, who do not even have electricity, and in some places more than 80% do not know how to read or write, living in a consumer society. I wonder how long the world's oil deposits, proven and potential, will last if we continue to consume energy at the same rate as today; what nature took 300 million years to create will last barely another 150 years. (Applause)

I am saying these things, because a false concept of quality of life has been planted in our brains.

How can there be quality of life without education? Just imagine the suffering of an illiterate person! Because there is something called self-esteem, and it is something more important than even food, self-esteem. (Applause)

What does it mean to be illiterate? It means being the lowest of the low, having to ask a friend to write a letter to your girlfriend. I saw this when I was a child, in a place where there was a high illiteracy rate and just a few people knew how to read and write, and others would have to ask them to write letters to a woman they wanted to court. But could not even dictate letters, saying how they dreamed of her all night long, and couldn't stop thinking of her, and couldn't even eat anymore, or that kind of thing. No, they would simply say to the person who knew how to read and write, "Write what you think you should write to her," to win the woman over. I am not exaggerating. I lived in the countryside, and that is the way it was.

How humiliating to have to sign your name with a fingerprint! And then there were those who later studied second, third, fourth or fifth grade, but what is a person with a fourth or fifth grade education?

Then they say that there, in the United States, they have democracy, and I wonder, if millions of people are illiterate, how can they make an informed decision when it comes to voting? If millions are semi-literate, how can they make an informed decision when it comes to voting? (Applause)

Now then, all of you have heard of the FTAA, and I wonder, deep inside, What if they tell them that the FTAA is the salvation for all of the torments and all of the disasters? (Whistling) In other words, how can someone who cannot read or write, or who barely has a fourth, fifth or sixth grade education, really understand what the FTAA is; what it will mean to open all of the borders of the countries that have a far inferior level of technological development and productivity to those that manufacture the most

advanced airplanes, to those that dominate communications worldwide, to those that want us to guarantee the supply of three things: raw materials, cheap labor and, customers? (Applause)

How can a population where a high percentage do not know how to read and write, and have no notion of economics, understand what it means to give up your own currency. To give up their own currency; some have already done it, without a second thought.

If our country had given up its own currency, it would not have been able to overcome the obstacles, particularly during what we call the 'special period', brought about by the demise of the socialist bloc. We never gave up.

Now, how could you explain the phenomenon of capital flight? What do you tell these people? But there is something so obvious that even a blind person could see it, and that is the fact that the currencies of our countries are obliged to escape and obliged to flee, whether they are honestly or dishonestly acquired.

Let us say that a professional manages to save the equivalent of 50,000 or 100,000 dollars, and it is deposited in a bank in his own country's currency. And suddenly, that currency, through the law of gravity, discovered by Newton, falls towards the United States -this is sort of law of lateral gravity, things do not fall towards the center of the Earth, but rather in a certain geographical direction (Applause)- and it has to go, because our currencies cannot sustain so-called parity.

It is true that in the fight against inflation, which is a kind of systematic and almost daily confiscation, a number of different formulas and promises emerged. Along with them came the infamous free exchange of currencies, which opened the doors for the money to flee.

As soon as there is the slightest budget deficit or balance of payments' deficit, problems immediately begin to crop up; even without the speculators, who contribute to these problems because this is the ideal environment for them to work in, and they take the money with them.

There is ample information on the money that flees, whatever its origins may be. This is something that has nothing to do with the debt, or the onerous interest on the debt, but rather with this law of the flight of weak currencies.

At one time, gold was currency, it had a value per se, and this was the case up until 1971 or 1972, when the esteemed president of the hegemonic power -although not yet unilaterally hegemonic- decided to abandon the gold standard for the U.S. dollar. From then on their currency was paper, it no longer had a value per se, the owners of the machines used to mint dollars minted it.

And where do the dollars go? They do not go to the Caribbean. Well, there may be some small island or other used as a tax haven, but those are exceptions. So, where do they go? They do not go to Africa; they do not go to any neighboring Latin American countries, because exactly the same thing happens to all of them.

You many have a currency called the X, which is on par with the U.S. dollar -I do not want to call it by its real name, because I do not want to mention the names of any countries- and in six weeks it might be worth a half or a third of what it was worth originally. And so you have these pieces of paper which once had a real value, because of their purchasing power, but after this phenomenon takes place, their value is reduced to a third or a quarter or less.

When you see that some currencies are hundreds of pesos to a dollar, you have to remember that at one time they were worth the same as a dollar. And that is the case with various currencies these days, whether you want to call them X's or bolívars -Chávez will not be upset with me, for having mentioned the bolívar, because he knows very well how our currencies come to be devalued. And then this money is forced to leave, to go off to the banks of the richest country in the world.

Now you see, this one single concept, how can we to explain it to people who are illiterate? How can we explain it to people with a sixth grade education? How can we explain it to people who do not have the slightest idea about economics, so that they understand these things? They can sell them an FTAA or ten FTAA's. (Applause) This is why it is essential to build awareness, to plant ideas, to educate, because people are capable of understanding when things are explained to them, and through examples. Today, ignorance has become a fertile breeding ground, an instrument to plunder, exploit and deceive us more every day.

That is why we, in our country -we talked about this on May Day- have developed a program to teach people to read and write by radio -not television- by radio; all the listener needs is a short-wave radio and some sheets of paper. The method has already been tested and proven effective. Local stations or the national radio network can broadcast the classes. Some are already using it. In fact, through our country's short-wave radio station, we could teach reading and writing to some illiterates in, say, the United States. (Applause)

We were recently reading that there are thousands of students in public school who have reached fourth grade and even ninth grade and do not know how to read. What kind of education are they being given? To think that there are 36 children to a classroom right there in Miami, where they have all the latest technology, and airplanes take off from there to beam pirate television broadcasts at a country where more than half of the hours in a day are now devoted to education, including many TV-hours that were previously left open, in order to save energy and fuel.

We recently dedicated a third television channel, exclusively for educational purposes, and we have also announced that in the first quarter of next year, a fourth channel, also educational, will begin broadcasting. Television is an excellent and little known way of transmitting knowledge on a massive level. (Applause) And there are others, I am not going to mention them now, that are incredibly effective; I am not going to explain why. But new possibilities are continuing to emerge.

To the gentleman from UNESCO and to any country in the world, we publicly offered on May Day, this patent, you could say, this formula, free of charge: programs to teach reading and writing by radio.

We also know of techniques to teach reading and writing by television, but the problem is that a large number of people who are illiterate do not have electricity or televisions.

In our country, there were just over 2300 schools in the countryside that did not have electrical power, and this problem was solved with simple solar panels just 1.2 square meters in size, which cost 1123 dollars each. (Applause) And so for less than four million dollars, we were able to equip all of these schools with solar panels. They can be used for the televisions assigned to all these schools, which consume only 60 watts of electricity, as well as for the computers. When there are a larger number of students, one solar panel does not supply enough electricity for two computers, and so two solar panels have to be installed, and that is why I said the cost was less than four million dollars. And so we have brought electricity to all of the country's rural schools. Not electricity for cooking, but electricity for televisions and computers in the schools. (Applause)

We have also recently made it possible for half a million Cubans who live in rural areas without electricity to watch television, with 1885 television and video clubs, with 50 seats each, equipped with a solar panel costing 1900 dollars. This meant that the total cost was fewer than four million dollars. So now all of these people have access to news and information and other television programs, for a ridiculously small amount of money, really, when you compare it to the billions and billions you hear about all the time. If even a small country subjected to a blockade for so many years can do it, then I do not know that there is any country that could not do it too. (Applause) You see, I am giving you concrete examples.

We have created, but not officially opened -the second year of studies will soon begin- a computer

sciences university with students selected from among the most talented throughout the whole country. Around 2000 students will be enrolled every year, and they will not be the only ones, of course. There, they will be trained more as analysts than programmers.

Well, there are other things as well that I am not going to mention, not only because of the time, but also because I hope that some day you will learn about them, and this is what is transforming our country and making it possible for it to live on the basis of its talents. This would be of no worth and of no importance if we were not deeply convinced that these methods can be extended massively, which would mean bringing an end to the shame of millions of people still illiterate in the world today. This problem has been discussed for 40 or 50 years now, when it could simply be eradicated in five years, if the United Nations wanted to do it, if UNESCO wanted to do it. These methods are so inexpensive! And then there could be follow-up courses, first grade, second grade, third grade, the possibilities are endless.

Creating schools and using simple methods like these is also a way of competing with prisons. (Applause) I am convinced that if one country can guarantee these modest, yet honorable and worthy things to all of its citizens, there is no reason why others cannot do the same. (Applause) And that is why I am speaking to you about these matters, and even somewhat passionately, because these are things that we have been thinking about for a long time. And as I confessed earlier, when we became aware of some of these things, through observation, and studying the lives of our citizens, we actually felt ashamed for not having discovered many of these things earlier, because of the well being they would have brought for all our people.

We are not recommending dogmatic formulas, we do not tell others what kind of social system they should have. I know of countries that have such a wealth of resources, that if they made adequate use of those resources, there would be no need to make revolutionary, radical changes to their economies, as our country has done. We know what happens in some places, like the poorest country in this hemisphere, Haiti, the problems it has with natural resources, while some people are very wealthy, but I am not going to get into this. The problem lies with the equitable distribution of wealth. (Applause and shouts) It would not even be necessary to confiscate anything, because in terms of what is possible... we need to think about what is desirable and what is possible, we have to differentiate between what can be dreamed of and what can be done now, and between what can be done now and what can be done within 20 or 30 years, based on the realities of the world today.

We do not regret in the slightest what we have done in our country and the way in which we have organized our society. (Applause) We have had the opportunity to learn a great deal about our potential, and we have an idea of our priorities, because it is very important for those of us who want a better world to have an idea of priorities, possibilities, and realities.

I have mentioned the famous FTAA project two or three times. Today, it is crucial for our peoples to prevent this poison from taking root in our countries. If we can do this, we would be achieving a great victory. (Applause and shouts)

I should add that we see advances being made in Latin America. If someone were to ask me why I felt such satisfaction and joy when news arrived of the election results in our beloved Argentina (Applause and shouts) I would say there is one very big reason: The worst of savage capitalism, as Chávez would say, the worst of neoliberal capitalism, and the ultimate symbol... I am not naming names, nobody can complain, unless someone feels that he is the symbol of what I am saying. In my view, one of the most extraordinary things is that this symbol of neoliberal globalization has been dealt a huge blow. (Applause and shouts)

You cannot imagine the service you have done to Latin America; you cannot imagine the service you have done to the world in sinking the symbol of neoliberal globalization to the furthest depths of the ocean. You have injected an enormous boost to the growing number of people throughout our Americas who have gradually become aware of what a horrible and fatal this thing called neoliberal globalization

really is. (Applause)

If you like, we could begin with what the Pope has said many times, and when he was visiting our country, when he spoke of the globalization of solidarity. Could anybody oppose the globalization of solidarity, in the fullest sense of the word, which encompasses not only relations among men and women within the borders of a country, but rather within the borders of the whole planet, and for solidarity to be practiced also by those who waste money and destroy and squander natural resources and condemn the inhabitants of this planet to death? (Applause and shouts)

You cannot reach heaven in one day, but believe me –I am not saying this to flatter you, and I am speaking with the greatest possible care– you have dealt an overwhelming blow to a symbol, and this is of the greatest value, and it has happened precisely at this critical moment, in this time of international economic crisis, which encompasses everyone. It is no longer a crisis in Southeast Asia, it is a crisis throughout the whole world, plus the threats of war, plus the consequences of an enormous debt, plus the inevitability of capital flight. It is a worldwide problem, and that is why there has also been a worldwide growth of awareness.

And that is why it will be a glorious day when the people of Argentina, in spite of all the difficulties, because as we all know, there are problems here and everywhere, often due to fragmentation, and disagreements, for there may be and even should be disagreements, but there are so many things of shared interest that we have to be convinced that these are the things that must prevail, in a world that is possible. Notice how that phrase has taken root: 'A better world is possible'. But when a better world has been attained, and it is indeed possible, we will have to continue repeating, a better world is possible, and then repeat it again, a better world is possible. (Applause and shouts of "Fidel! Fidel! Fidel!" and "Ole, ole, ole, ole, Fidel, Fidel!")

I have been telling you here, in these unusual conditions –which have made it even more of a pleasure– about our country's modest experience, and how day by day we have learned more and more new things. When we were fighting against a 30% rate of illiteracy, how far we were from imagining that one day we would be extending university studies to all of the masses, extending university campuses to all of the country's municipalities, thanks to the human capital we have developed, without which such an aspiration would have been impossible. And that is why I have said, and Martí had already said it years before to those who called him a dreamer, he said that, today's dreams would be tomorrow's realities. (Applause and shouts)

There is no such thing as a dreamer, and I can tell you that as a dreamer who has had the privilege of seeing realities that he could never have dreamed possible. I do not consider it a merit, but rather another privilege, and a fortunate stroke of fate to be alive, despite the hundreds of plots to speed up my journey to the grave. (Shouts) And in fact, they have done me a great service, because they have forced me to lose the instinct for self-preservation and to realize that values constitute true quality of life, the supreme quality of life, above even food, shelter and clothing. I do not in any way diminish the importance of material needs, they always have to come first, because in order to study, and to achieve that other quality of life, it is first necessary to satisfy certain needs that are physical, material; but quality of life lies with knowledge, with culture.

When people finish work for the day, they want to go somewhere to see a good movie, or to a theater to see an excellent production of a play, or a dance performance, or a concert by a musical group. Once they have had breakfast, lunch and dinner, they want recreation, entertainment. Nobody wants their children to be entertained by learning to use drugs, or watching violent, absurd acts, which poison the minds of these children. (Applause) Quality of life is something else; quality of life is patriotism, quality of life is dignity, quality of life is honor. (Applause and shouts) Quality of life is the self-esteem that every human being has the right to enjoy. (Applause and shouts)

To all of the people of Argentina, dearest brothers and sisters of Latin America, whatever your beliefs, thoughts or ideas may be, it has not been my intent to hurt or offend anyone. If anyone were to think

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that anything I have said here could be interpreted as interference in the affairs of Argentina, something I have certainly tried to avoid, especially in view of the extraordinary solidarity and warmth with which I have been welcomed in this city and this country, if anyone were to believe this, then I sincerely ask you to forgive us.

Long live brotherhood among the peoples! (Shouts of "Viva!")

Long live humanity! (Shouts of "Viva!")

Ever onward to victory!

Thank you.

(Ovation)

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