

## [Interview given by Commander in Chief to the national and international press , Assembly Hall of the University of Havana](#)

### **Autor:**

- [Castro Ruz, Fidel](#)

**Journalist:** How did you like the lecture [by Rosario Green, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico]?

**Fidel Castro:** It was a good historical review, a clear explanation of Mexican policy, always based on specific principles of respect for the law, following Juarez's principle whereby respect for the rights of others is peace. And she explained those principles, with which Mexico has always been consistent, because it shouldn't be forgotten that Mexico's was the first social revolution of this century, even before the Russian Revolution.

It had a remarkable influence in the whole hemisphere; it had an influence in Cuba. All Latin American revolutionaries perceived Mexico as a common heritage. We ourselves looked at it that way. When we needed a place to reorganize ourselves, we chose Mexico. It was practically the only choice.

After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, Mexico set a unique example in the hemisphere: the only country that didn't break off with Cuba, that firmly maintained relations opposite the pressure of the United States, that has pursued a firm, consistent international policy at the United Nations.

It shouldn't be forgotten that an important agreement on states' economic rights and duties, not only Mexico's dream but the whole world's was adopted by the United Nations following a Mexican initiative, although it was never implemented.

Mexico has opposed the blockade. Mexico has adopted very firm stands with regard to Cuba opposite all the pressures, whether over in the Santiago summit or in the last OAS meeting.

This lady, the Mexican foreign minister, expressed very firm, clear and categorical views at the OAS meeting and they have been really friendly positions.

It's a country that has had to operate under very difficult geopolitical conditions, as they often say nowadays-a neighbor to the north, a border of 3,000 kilometers, a wall one hundred times bigger than the Berlin wall, and a whole series of measures that have been taken against that country, which was the target of attacks in the last century. A sister nation of this hemisphere, which had half of its territory snatched by the United States in an unjust war; in other words, a country that has suffered, that has a strong sense of patriotism, a country where they wanted to establish an empire, which not only had to fight for its independence but also after, because they tried to reconquer it from Europe and it had to liberate itself with a heroic struggle.

So it has had to struggle very hard to defend its independence and it values all that highly. It values sovereignty highly and has to defend it in complicated conditions.

Look how she recalled, she used a phrase that I listened to with great interest: "It's the northern border of Latin America."

I think I should add to that that she was very careful, as you might have noticed. I am more at liberty to

recalling all these things, but she was very careful and managed to avoid any phrase that might have been of a confrontational nature toward her neighbor. She was very calm in what she said and careful in her explanation. That speaks highly of her. She didn't talk about these issues that I'm referring to here but, at the OAS, she protested very strongly Cuba's exclusion and defended Cuba.

I was asking you, Commander, if those conditions- that attachment to independence, to sovereignty and to international principles-are precisely what make Cuba and Mexico have so much in common in the international arena.

She explained that when she addressed the history, when she recalled that Cuba-although it was not yet independent, but where there was already a national spirit-was the place where Juárez stayed when his country was going through difficult times.

At that time, many Mexicans came to Cuba. Many outstanding Mexicans came to Cuba. They were exiled in Cuba. Well, it's a great honor for us that Juárez has been here, because Juárez is one of the most illustrious personalities in Mexico's history, and we're also linked by what she recalled-the presence of Martí and his activities in Mexico, which we Cubans appreciate so much.

Ours have been two countries that have helped each other, whose relations have been reciprocal, and I didn't mention before one of the greatest proofs of Mexico's merits and its love for independence: it was a country that recognized the Spanish Republic, that welcomed thousands and thousands of exiles after the war, that maintained relations with the Spanish Republic when that republic no longer existed. It was, let's say, an example, a symbol of loyalty to certain ideals and to certain principles.

For us, Mexico is very special, because it was the only country-take good note of this-the only country among the independent countries from the Rio Grande del Sur [on the U.S-Mexico border] up to here, the only Latin American country that maintained relations with our country. And it was there right next door, the nearest to the northern neighbor. No more than two countries in Latin America have borders with the United States: Mexico and Cuba.

Commander, what do you think about the pressures that the United States is putting on Mexico in matters like drug trafficking and Chiapas?

Or in matters like money laundering or matters of every kind. A lecture could be given on those topics.

They're proof of the empire's growing arrogance, of its interference in other countries' internal affairs, despite the fact that Mexico-I have my own theory on this-is a country that scares the United States, because it's a relatively big country, with resources-above all, a large population. And they've always been very much afraid of any explosion, crisis, problems in Mexico. They can't forget the experience of the Mexican Revolution, an event of great historical importance, which even led to cases of intervention, to more than one case of United States intervention.

Mexico was the first country to take such measure as the nationalization of oil, a product of the Mexican Revolution implemented by Lázaro Cardenas one of its most distinguished men. That was the source of many conflicts. But, there they have the Mexican oil, which they've defended awesomely against the plans, the interests and the wishes of the northern neighbors to also gain control of that sector of the Mexican economy.

The United States, as I said, has intervened several times in Mexico throughout the years of the revolution and also in the last century. It's an old story. And now they've just carried out a very dirty action against Mexico, this so-called Operation Casablanca, in which, for three years, their agents carried out an illegal investigation in that country, without consulting the government, without any coordination with its authorities.

I would say that this was an act of tremendous disloyalty, which has hurt us all a lot, not only the

Mexicans. What they did is like the work of gangsters: sending agents, investigating, organizing a party over in Las Vegas-I think the exact place is called Casagrande. They invited a number of Mexican bank officials to a big party there and arrested them along with several Venezuelans. And I'm not judging the matters related to the offenses or illegal actions they might have committed. I mean the methods used: conducting an investigation for three years and then tricking those people in order to capture them in the United States and setting up a huge scandal over that, for the miserable results that they got; investigating money-laundering operations, if they can be called money-laundering operations for the meager sum of 30, 40 or 50 million, when the American banks have laundered the most dollars in this world. They've laundered hundreds of billions of dollars, and almost all of the drug money has been laundered by the United States banks themselves.

All that operation, all that offense, to simply discover what happened with a few tens of millions of dollars and setting up a huge scandal with which to discredit Mexico, to offend it, humiliate it and Venezuela, too.

I read a cable that said that their hope was the information that the detainees might be able to give on many other bankers. One is amazed that actions of that nature can be committed against such a cautious, such a respectful neighbor as Mexico is. It's something really outrageous and I believe that the Mexicans are rightly outraged.

She didn't want to tackle that kind of topic, for the reasons that I mentioned. She was cautious. She gave an academic lecture. But they're firm in their policies and they know their subject very well.

You have to bear in mind the difficult and complex conditions in which the Mexicans have to struggle, and they resist the pressures as much as they can, in a situation in which they have to be in incessant contact every day.

Look at how things are-every day of the year, one million Mexicans cross the border to and from the U.S. In other words, more than 350 million arrivals and departures of Mexicans. I'm not speaking about the few that go there to work with a legal permit. I'm referring to those who usually cross because they live in Mexico and they go to places near the border but in United States territory, to do a lot of jobs that the North Americans are no longer willing to do. If they want a garden, it's a Mexican that cares for it. If tomatoes or something need picked, it's a Mexican that picks tomatoes. If there's any hard, low-paid job, it's the Mexican that does it. But what happens? Despite all that, the wages on the other side of the border are higher than on this side of the border and many Mexicans who have their families, their houses on Mexican territory cross over and go back.

One of the other things causing huge pressure is the gigantic wall that they've put up there-a high number of Mexicans die trying to cross that wall to go establish themselves there for economic reasons, as part of the migratory movements worldwide generated by the economic situation in the Third World countries, in the poorest countries.

So, it's a war the United States is waging against the immigrants. They've taken a host of measures resulting in the death of a large number of Mexicans. I don't know the exact figure of those who might have died trying to cross over, but I have the impression that those who now die every year crossing that wall are more than those who died during the whole time that the Berlin Wall existed, because, to cross over, they go through deserts, they go through dangerous places.

They've even told me that they sometimes have to cross the expressways, where the cars go at fantastic speeds; they sometimes walk in the middle, along the median strip of the expressways, trying to escape. They die in accidents, while being chased, or they die of thirst or of asphyxia or from police shots. That is, they have to endure all that.

There's an anti-Latin American, anti-immigration spirit within the United States, which is growing like in Europe, and that's the result of underdevelopment, of the existence of a world that has remained under-

developed as a consequence of plunder and exploitation.

Now, these rich countries are scared and they're taking more and more extreme action. They even adopt racist xenophobic positions, very similar to some policies implemented by the fascists in their time.

That phenomenon of immigrants persecution is growing. In other words, it's not only the pressures that you mentioned-there are many other ways in which they put on pressure.

The Mexicans have to fight every day even for the implementation of the agreement, because the others invent non-tariff measures. If they find a little spot on a piece of fruit, they say: "No, there's a pest. Those products can't come in." They cause obstructions; they impose very restrictive measures with transport. There could be a truck with fruit, with avocados, with vegetables, and then the difficulties in crossing to the other side are tremendous. It's costfull. They place obstacles, using different pretexts, against trucks traveling through United States territory, while United States trucks travel through the whole of Mexico, which has many highways and has been building more and more highways.

Mexican trucks don't have the same facilities for transporting products for export and then, just imagine, they keep them there for hours on end, in unending queues, while they search them, looking for drugs or immigrants-every kind of demand thus hindering exports.

Well, they do that with other countries, too. Non-tariff measures will come into vogue as customs tariffs disappear.

They apply formulas to the Chileans, for example, and they don't want to let their salmon in, or they set very high tariffs on them simply because they compete with the salmon that the Americans produce in California. They put pressure on them there and then they say that the salmon in Chile is subsidized and they increase the tariffs on it and apply every kind of measure. Sometimes, they' are sanitary regulations. They find a bunch of grapes that has a problem or something and they say that there's this or that pest and they stop the import of Chilean grapes and other products.

In fact, they're having to fight a strong, powerful, domineering, arrogant neighbor, used to giving orders.

That's why the idea that I mentioned from the lecture caught my attention. I thought it over a little and I bore in mind the true situation, whereby they're there opposite those neighbors.

Commander, the foreign minister spoke about the free-trade agreement with countries of the region, Latin American countries. Does Cuba hope to sign a free-trade agreement with Mexico? Is this an aspiration?

She didn't say a single word about that, seemingly out of fear of the United States. But we hold Mexico in high esteem and we're very careful in our relations with that sister nation. Relations develop, trade develops and there are other important things. We have certain agreements on investment, on other things. We're starting to do things; we're starting to move forward. It seems to me that this isn't an issue that we should address during this visit-agreements of that sort that could be relatively important now and, on the other hand, be a reason for great irritation on the part of the United States. We shouldn't raise or tackle issues or request measures that, although very legitimate, could, under the present circumstances, cause problems, conflict or antagonism between the United States and Mexico. I'd say that it would be a sensitive subject.

I listened one by one to each country that she mentioned. They themselves told me what they're doing. I believe, really, that Mexico should develop its relations as much as possible with the rest of the world -with Europe, with the Asian countries, with the rest of Latin America-because the more relations it develops with the rest of the world, the more possibilities it will have to maintain an independent policy,

given that more than 80 per cent of its exports -I don't know if it's already 82 per cent to 84 per cent-go to the United States.

There's a true fact: They say that what the [North American] Free-Trade Agreement did was to provide a judicial framework to a de facto situation that already existed. Due to the circumstances of their geographical proximity, there were already some economic relations based on exports to the United States, which were very high-around 70 percent-and unregulated. They feel the treaty regulates a de facto situation that already existed while it gives them more possibilities to defend their interests than they had without the treaty. That's how they feel about it.

Of course, the treaty presents its problems and its consequences, isn't it so? The treaty should be analyzed now and with a view to the future as the years go by. The Yankees draw up their strategies for the long term and, as time passes, they'll have more possibilities to penetrate the Mexican economy, to take control of important branches and to export their goods to Mexico. There are many problems still to be discussed, including many agreements that will enter into force within 10 years, 15 years. But the day will come when there will be almost no obstacle whatsoever to any kind of good or service and, naturally, the partner is a very powerful partner, very ambitious, very rich and that poses a certain risk, don't you think?

So, I see the Mexican strategy as one concerned over developing as much as possible and securing as much investment as possible from everywhere.

The assumption was-and I thought it would be that way-that the treaty could attract lots of capital not only from the United States but also from other countries, because there are many businessmen who want to penetrate the United States market and, if their industries are there in Mexico, then their products can be exported to the United States.

In Mexico, there have not only been economic problems but difficult political problems as well-in other words, a complicated situation in politics, too. And then there was a huge crisis as a result of the large amount of short-term capital invested there. The speculative operations, in my opinion, reduced the possibilities for greater investment from other countries in Mexico.

Certain things one should not ask, right? Because we're not going to go around questioning the Mexicans about their strategies or about what they might be thinking. You have to make your own inferences and it seemed to me that a lot of capital was going to flow from other regions into Mexico. Nevertheless, investment has increased a lot.

I think I could infer that the Mexicans were trying to gain time, to strengthen their economy, strengthen their industry in order to be in a better position to live together and coexist as neighbors and as partners with an economic, technological, cultural, political and military monster such as the United States is. In other words, it's a hard struggle to defend their identity and to defend their sovereignty under difficult conditions.

But all these phenomena must be looked at in an even longer term, because two trends are emerging in the world: regional economic agreements or, let's just say, to shorten it, regional agreements and multilateral agreements. There are two parallel trends. I could observe that in Geneva, at the WTO.

The Yankees have always been more inclined toward the multilateral. They're even accusing Clinton of having abandoned the traditional policy of looking for multilateral agreements, because they want everything to be global. But, now, with their characteristic pragmatism and their immense ambitions, they're like a fisherman with two hooks or, if you like, with two long lines-they're fishing with the hook of regional agreements and with the hook of multilateral agreements, looking for a North American Free-Trade Agreement here and a Free-Trade Agreement of the Americas there in Latin America. They aren't very, very, very fond-not at all, you could say-of Mercosur or the Latin American Integration Association or of any form of Latin American economic unity. They don't want any of that. They want discussions

one by one, with every country in the region if possible. They don't want to see unity because in unity lies strength.

If I were to dream, I would have wished for Latin Americans to have united first and then later discussed altogether with the powerful northern neighbor.

Unfortunately, the Latin Americans have been unable to overcome the obstacles, to overcome the intrigues that imperialism has used to prevent them from uniting.

Right now, they've devised things, such as a possible arms race in the region, the unrestricted sale of sophisticated weapons. And that gives rise to the situation whereby, if Argentina buys weapons, the Chileans buy; if the Chileans buy, the Peruvians buy; if the Peruvians buy, the Ecuadoreans buy; and if they buy, the Brazilians buy too.

Why, at this precise moment, are they removing all restrictions on the sale of sophisticated weapons? Why do they proclaim certain countries to be their strategic allies? It's something very strange, a very strange little trick.

Then it turns out that, now, the Argentinean military government is the strategic ally of the United States. The Argentinean military played a significant role in Central America. They sent special intelligence and training groups to work with the counter-revolutionaries in the dirty war in Nicaragua and to repress the revolutionary movement in El Salvador.

The Argentinean military were so excited that they felt encouraged, believing that they already had a strategic ally, to invade the Malvinas [Falklands], in an ill-prepared operation, making loads of military mistakes. A lot could be said about that but it would take a long time because they were even buying weaponry in Europe-the famous Exocet missiles, which could be launched from 300 kilometers and fly, undetected, right on the sea surface ; and, at that time, the warships lacked the technology for repelling them. They'd bought around 80 in France. Imagine-they were so excited that they didn't even wait for those missiles to arrive.

Among the Argentinean military, those who acted with the most daring and bravery were the pilots. I met and talked with a group of them when I was there in [San Carlos de] Bariloche. I had to make a stopover at a base that was the base from where those planes used to leave that attacked and sank some British ships. They sent ill-prepared soldiers who could not even operate the missiles. They'd only received a few missiles from the batch they'd bought. Had they waited six or seven months, the Argentinean pilots could have sunk the squadron of Her British Majesty. Yes, that's what I say, objectively.

I've read quite a lot about that war. I know all those details and I analyze the mistakes that were made. They got excited because they were rendering important services in Central America. Now, they're being declared strategic allies. That's not very clear, not at all. If there's a war in the Gulf, they send a ship to the Gulf. That's far away-the Malvinas are much closer. And it's not that I'm advising that any ships be sent to the Malvinas but, if a ship can't be sent to the Malvinas, there's no reason to send it so far in order to see a war on CNN.

In that type of war, with intelligent weapons, Cruise missiles and invisible bombers that escape radar surveillance, the cooperation they can give is very, very modest.

The Yankees would certainly like, for example, to create a Pan-American intervention force, so as not to send their troops if any situation were to arise.

A high-ranking United States official said a few weeks ago that, for example, a fire in the Amazon, which could affect the atmosphere and thus the United States, would justify military intervention in Brazil. Come on!

There's also talk, comments, discussions about possible intervention in Colombia, under one pretext or other.

They'd like a Pan-American peace force that would go to war in those places and not them, just like they also want one in Africa after the experience of Somalia -interventionist forces.

They'd also like to have them in Latin America but I think that, currently, despite the respect that many Latin American governments still have for the United States, despite their habits of submission and deference, today's world is different. There are different interests, and people are more aware. It would be hard for the United States to succeed in creating a contingent of Pan-American troops, but they'd love to do it. However, I don't think that the Latin Americans will be caught with that little hook or that big hook.

That's what I think, but their strategy can be clearly seen: create economic divisions, invent all sorts of things, turn everything into a bone of contention- weapons sales, the category of strategic allies-faced with a potential seat on the Security Council, to try to have several candidates come forward and then divide them with Machiavellian tactics.

Who was it who said "Divide and rule"? I think that's from the epoch of the Roman Empire. The tactic of divide and rule. Look how old it is, from the time of the biggest empire that ever existed before this one. No, the British empire came after. But the first great empire already had the motto of divide and rule, just like how, in some countries' domestic policy, their politics is to divide: divide and weaken, divide and destroy.

Part of their great rage against Cuba is that they haven't been able to divide or destroy, despite the enormous efforts they've made.

But, well, there are all these factors, from the political and economic point of view.

That's why we are decidedly in favor of European integration. The Yankees don't like it much. We're in favor of the euro. The Yankees don't much like the euro and they dream. They say: "Oh, very good! That will be successful." But what they want, desire and dream about is for the euro to fail so that the dollar continues being the only reserve currency in the world.

It would suit the world to have a strong currency that could, at some time, compete with the dollar, and if another was to arise too. But they're not interested in that.

I'm telling you, they're fishing with two hooks. And I'm repeating this because there are two important movements at this time: one, aimed at removing all barriers at world level, a world free-trade agreement, and trying to use the WTO for that, with the drawback in the WTO that there are many Third World countries in it. That's what I stated in Geneva: we must be united. Let the Chinese join; let Russia and the other countries of the former USSR join. Let them all join. They put obstacles and conditions in their way because they control that. They're in control because, well, it's known that they have enough power for that.

They print the world's currency. They've turned paper into gold. Before, it had a gold value but not now. Since Nixon abolished that, the dollar is no longer convertible into gold. But the world has no other currency. They print the paper and the others keep it. They don't save and yet they're the ones who invest the most in the world using other peoples' money.

They'd like to see an accelerated process of multilateral agreements leading to the complete removal of all obstacles to investment by their transnationals, to American investments, technology and trade.

You see, this question is so complicated that even many Americans don't understand it. In the final

analysis, it suits their imperial interests but they've laid obstacles for their government.

In that sense, Clinton was applying an intelligent strategy for the empire's economic interests. And Clinton cares a lot about the transnationals' interests, because he's one of those who makes a phone call to whatever country, whatever government whenever their companies are trying to compete to get some concession or some deal. He's got telephones for that. He works very much in line with the companies. But, in the United States itself and inside his party, he has opponents because they have certain fears.

Some have links with the trade unions and they're afraid that some factory might be pulled out of there and taken to the other side of the border with Mexico because wages are much lower there; or that they might be taken to the Dominican Republic, where there are 80 free-trade zones; or that they might be taken to Central America, where the wages are 20 or 30 times lower than in the United States. And some workers are afraid that the companies might take those factories away. A certain number of legislators are associated with those trade unions and, so, in certain ways, they hinder the policy of the empire and they've denied Clinton the fast-track procedure. They obstruct his plans, the voracious plans of the empire, his hopes of gulping down and swallowing up Latin America's economy-turning Latin America into a region of assembly plants and nobody knowing where on earth their products would end up, because there aren't enough markets.

The Canada-United States relationship is something different. The Canadians export energy-they even export water, because the United States is running out of drinking water- electricity from hydroelectric plants and high-technology products.

In Canada, nobody produces shoes or jeans to export to the United States. Their trade amounts to one billion a day, but they export other things.

The Mexicans do export oil, gas, other raw materials, many products for the assembly-plant industries, which produce items on very low wages. The trade between Canada and the United States, two developed countries, is different from the trade that Mexico and other countries, Central America and other countries, have with the United States.

To wrap up this idea, I'd like to say that, after the empire has been fishing with two hooks, working intensively, they now want to speed up the Free-Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) and they've run into obstacles because that could take years. And the American representatives suggested there, in South America, that there was no need to wait all that time and that, instead of a final agreement, they could start making partial agreements. A little trick to first start agreeing on those things that interest them most and leaving to the end the most complicated things , those of interest to Latin Americans. If they accepted those proposals-well, they'd have to be idiots-the result would be that, when they seat to discuss what interests them they would have nothing to bargain with. And they've at least had the common sense to tell them No.

This whole policy is very clear. I'm trying to explain to you that there's an economic and political strategy: to weaken, to divide, in different ways. Using every possible way, they're attacking, defending their economic interests, those of their transnationals.

Now, since there are two ways, the two have started advancing somewhat. It seems more logical, it would perhaps be more interesting for the Third World, to have regional unity first so as to command enough power for discussion. Otherwise, it's a fight between an ant and an elephant.

Europe itself has had to unite, while being a group of very developed countries, in order to be able to put up a fight and compete, so that it is not left out of the game. And, what's more, if it acted carelessly, it might be left out. At the moment, they're strongly defending there matters related to the entertainment industry. They don't want to hand over their television channels and movies to American companies. They want to defend their culture. There are certain things that they're struggling to defend.



They have to unite. If they don't do, Soros will come along. He already did it with their currencies. One day, he did away with the Spanish peseta; the next day, it was the franc; the day after, the lira; after that, the pound sterling. All that was European. Unity is not happening as a result of philosophical reasoning but of a vital need to achieve stability and economic independence.

I want you to know that unity means a substantial relinquishment, which has already started taking place, of the sovereignty of the European national states. Now, when the euro begins, there will be an absolutely independent European central bank. Governments will no longer be able to operate with their currency or make monetary policies: increasing interest rates to prevent inflation, lowering interest rates etc. Those prerogatives, which are among the most important for a developed country will exist no more. They're being handed over to a bank.

The neoliberalization policies are also part of an offensive against the popular forces; they do away with the trade unions, and practically with everything, in order to do away with the advances extracted by the workers in many of those countries after the World War II, more than in the United States, since there they were faced with the presence of the socialist bloc and the USSR and they feared communism. Neoliberalization policies are now trying to put all those advances behind.

They haven't been able to solve the problem of unemployment. They've got a lot of problems. But Europe has to unite in order to be sufficiently strong.

Well, China doesn't have to unite with anybody, because China is a force by itself. Those in south-east Asia will have to unite and Russia will have no choice but to rise on its feet. It would be a tragedy otherwise. It's an extremely complicated situation. Even in the field of economics, the symptoms can be seen.

Right now, that country is in a very deep crisis. They are making great effort but nobody has the answer. Again, it all depends on the Monetary Fund lending it 10 or 15 billion. Some say that there's no need; others have said that there's an urgent need for 10 to 15 billion. But the Monetary Fund has no more funds. They virtually ran out of funds in south-east Asia because of what it had to use there and in South Korea. The Monetary Fund is left with between 10 and 15 billion in reserve. And now the Russians are asking for 10 to 15 billion. Those from south-east Asia, when the relapse comes, will need more money. Japan needs money to strengthen the yen, another clever maneuver of the northern neighbors: buy yen because, if the yen continues falling, it could end up making the south-east Asian economy collapse. And we're living at a time of great risks and possibly a time of a relatively imminent global economic crisis. It doesn't mean that it would be the last or that it would be the end of capitalism. It may be that more than one will be needed. But there are risks and they're on the run.

What weapons do they use? Well, lies. Since panic is an ingredient of financial crises in the stock markets and, in turn, the stock markets are in grave danger because in the United States stocks are grossly overrated, there is the risk of a crisis; they are in a panic that everybody may start selling their stocks, that the value of these stocks might fall drastically and that the millions of middle-class people that Clinton talks about might be ruined, and still that there might be a crisis like that of 1929.

They're devising things to avoid that, but there's still no device. There's no way to square the circle. And now they're coming up with all these things. The Fund can't do it any more, it doesn't have enough funds. Clinton has asked for 18 billion for the IMF but the right wing in the United States has said "No way" and they have opposed giving the 18 billion to strengthen the Fund a bit.

What did it do then, when the yen was loosing value threatening to drag down other economies and create a disaster that could spread to Latin America? Because there are some countries where the conditions exist, and some very important countries. In Brazil, let's say, the conditions exist for the actions of speculators, due to the well-known fact that there is an overvalued currency, a large budget deficit and a significant current-account deficit, plus the risks that, in terms of exports, derive from the

fact that, as products from south-east Asia get cheaper with the crisis, their exports may be affected. In other words, there are vulnerable countries, very vulnerable, and if that crisis reaches a country like Brazil, it will immediately drag in Argentina and others and it could relapse and even reach Mexico. That's the real situation that exists.

It was when the yen started to fall dangerously for the world economy that the fright came. The Yankees, who impose every sort of condition on the Japanese, are telling them: "Open your doors and windows", while the Japanese always said: "Development, yes, but with the savings of the Japanese"-who are the ones who save the most in the world-"the Japanese banks, the Japanese insurance companies, the Japanese industry." On this occasion, they've had to rush to slow down the fall of the yen.

Did they do it out of philanthropy? No, but rather because of the consequences that fall could have beyond certain limits. They rushed and invested eight billion. They raised the value of the yen a little, from 146 to 138 to a dollar. But you never know, because they're faced with uncontrollable phenomena.

They defended themselves with lies. They said: "No, everything's fine. The economy's wonderful. The United States is in no danger. It has lower unemployment than ever before. There's no inflation and there's a budget surplus and all that."

That's the tactic of the International Monetary Fund and the dominant power. Every time there's a crisis somewhere that threatens the system's interests, Clinton immediately comes out and says: "Everything's great. The measures that they've taken are brilliant." And the man from the Federal Reserve comes out: "No problem.. The measures they've taken are wonderful. The economy's doing great; everything's great." And the man from the World Bank comes out: "Everything's great." And the Chairman of the Fund at the head of them all, so as to avoid panic.

Now, with the latest Russian financial crisis, the Russians devised I don't know how many things to bring in some money, because one of the Russians' problems is tax collection. There's no way those people who became multimillionaires overnight and took between 200 and 300 billion dollars abroad would pay taxes. So, if there's no money from tax, the teachers can't be paid, neither can the employees-absolutely no-one.

What is the Monetary Fund doing? While they've postponed delivering 670 million from a previous credit that they had granted, which they are handing over in bits and pieces, they are asking the Russians to privatize gas, oil, whatever is left out there. They're imposing conditions, such as that they collect the taxes. They're not hurrying, no. When the others are desperate, that's the time to make demands. That's the tactic. On the other hand, they praise to the skies the measures proposed by the new government, to build up confidence and win time.

They're now talking about things that happened in south-east Asia that they didn't talk about before, when they spoke about the development of the countries of south-east Asia and said: "These are the models. This is the model for the world."

When the disaster came about, they started relating everything that was happening with the banks: banking policy, the way in which credit was distributed, privileges, corruption etc. But they had not said a single word about that before. They have deceived the world, they resort to lies as much as they can and they use the Monetary Fund to support an imperial and dominant policy. This time, they rushed to buy yens with the United States' own money. They'll have to sell them later and they're imposing tough conditions: "Change. Open your doors wide to United States investment. Go down on your knees." This is what they're saying to the Japanese government and the Japanese seem to find it difficult to go down on their knees. They've resisted as much as possible.

I was saying that there were two ways: regional agreements and multilateral agreements. In the end, they come together in this unstoppable globalization process-the transnationals are already the ones

that really rule the world. There's no program or common sense, nor can there be-just the market, which solves each and every thing; the market, which decides everything.

The market-as I put it the other day-is a mad, ferocious beast running wild and creating chaos everywhere. That's the world economic situation.

Since we started talking about Mexico, which is now in that agreement, when it is multilateralism that prevails, Mexico will be in the same conditions as the rest. In other words, they're now in partnership with the northern neighbor and, afterward, they'll have to be in partnership with the world.

The question that must be asked is what's going to happen next, if that world is sustainable from the economic point of view, because the globalized world that we can see coming is a world that was conceived more than 150 years ago.

This was going to happen as a result of the development of the productive forces and technology- Marx talked about that 150 years ago-but it's only now that it can be seen in full strength.

It's growing, its movement irrepressible. There is no going back. Nobody can stop it. The United States, of course, doesn't want to. But, even if it wanted to, it can't, because there are many forces at play within itself: the attorney-general does one thing, Congress does another and the President does something else. Well, the domestic situation is rather chaotic for making decisions. They can't implement a coherent strategy.

Clinton has quite a clear economic strategy, in favor of the economic interests of his transnationals. But he can't even implement it fully. Those who have tens of billions don't ask anybody where they're going to invest, what currency they're going to buy, what sort of speculation they're going to carry out.

Do you know who makes the decisions? The computers. They give them a series of parameters, just like those they taught to play chess, and they tell them what to do after the opposing player's every move. And then they tell them: "If the opponent moves this pawn, move this one."

It's now practically the computers that are giving the orders to the agents of finance capital: "Sell this currency right now, quickly. Buy this other one. Sell such and such stocks from such and such a country. Buy this other one. Move so many million over here; move so much over there." The money is not even American money anymore; it's the transnationals' money. That's the situation. They're the ones that decide what is most essential in today's world, the movement of capital. Who can stop the world's finances in a globalized world? Nobody can.

It's been a while since the transnationals were internationalized. We could say, in this regard, that the transnationals are internationalists. (Laughter.) They no longer have a homeland. They turn to the government so that they defend them-nothing more. If there's a little problem, some conflict-"Hey, look, somebody's breaking off a piece of me." Then the United States government starts to take measures. The transnationals are running wild around the world. They're the ones that rule it. It's chaotic!

The environment-what do the transnationals care about the environment?

There are things that can be seen clearly and this is very important for today's young people because they're going to live through all that. They are going to live through the whole globalization process, with the transnationals running wild throughout the world.

So, what about the environment? Among other things, the situation with nature is a very serious problem, very serious indeed, very serious. Well, it isn't just Rubiera [from the Havana Weather Bureau] talking about that now. It's not just a theoretician talking about that. (Laughter.) It's the neighbors who suddenly go through a tremendous heat wave; or it's a country where it suddenly rains 80 times in 110 days of the sugar harvest, like in Matanzas, and then it doesn't rain when the sugar cane should be

sown-a disaster; hurricanes that don't come from the east and then come from the west.

What kind of winds were those of over a 100 kilometers speed that tore down banana trees? They were hurricanes from the west and not one, but several. The sea hasn't penetrated there, but the damage that these winds do to the banana plantations, fruit trees and other crops is considerable.

There was a hurricane in Moscow. Can you imagine a hurricane in Moscow? A hurricane went from north to south-more than 1,000 injured, nobody knows how much destruction, winds of more than 100 kilometers in Moscow. Heat of I don't know how many degrees -almost more than in Havana. So, the damage against the environment is a fact. It's not speculation from theoreticians. The task of the future generation in this coming century, among others, is to save the environment.

It's a chaotic world. That world that capitalist globalization is leading to can't survive. It can't be sustained. It inevitably brings about crises. That's why I was explaining that the methods of the last century were no longer the most advisable, nor those of the first half of this century, nor even those from after the triumph of the revolution, because there was a time of world equilibrium.

Revolutions like Cuba's could have happened in Latin America, because all the objective conditions were there. It was the subjective factors that weren't there. But, today things are different. They are global. It's the strength of the people, their education and awareness. The masses, with their growing power, will be the ones to solve these problems.

Today, it's not really a case of a country having to do this or that. A revolution triumphs, for example, in an isolated country in Central America today; what would happen to it in this world I have described? How long would it last? How long would it last when the Inter-American Bank comes and cancels all its credit and another one comes and cancels all its credit and another one comes and closes its markets? They won't need to fire a single shot.

It would almost be advisable to say: "Revolutionaries, be patient."

If they win the elections-this is something I said in the women's meeting; that hasn't been published yet, because I want to double-check that material, but I haven't had time-, they'll first have to start making a whole load of concessions so that some are not frightened. Otherwise, they tell them: "This guy's going to scare away capital because the things he's saying are too radical." They have to tone down their language, even their programs. When they enter the government there's not much that they can do from there, not even a left-wing party. The others already have all the mass media in their hands, all the resources, capital, technology. They have everything.

Of course, we mustn't discourage anyone from fighting. On the contrary, we have to tell everybody to struggle wherever they might be: if it's in a factory, then in a factory; in a trade union, wherever; women, students, small farmers.

There are, for example, very interesting movements, like the Landless Movement in Brazil, something new -land lying idle while they wait till doomsday for a land reform so they can occupy it. There are also homeless movements, where there are loads of empty houses and they go and move into the houses.

Mass movements are emerging that are being built up with tremendous force and I believe that those movements will play a fundamental role in future struggles.

There will be other tactics. It will no longer be Bolshevik-style tactics or even tactics like ours, because those tactics belonged to a different world.

In today's world, the one that I've been trying to define, new tactics have to emerge, but this doesn't mean discouraging anybody, anywhere, from doing things as they see fit. But we try to see and analyze, with the greatest possible objectivity, the current situation and the development of the struggle, under

the unipolar domain of one superpower-the United States.

There will be other ways and other roads along which the conditions will start being created so that that global world is transformed into another world. I can't conceive of any other globalization that isn't a socialist globalization. There can be no other. And also-and I understand this perfectly-the world is moving toward forms of international government, of world govern-ment. There's a definite plan. The United Nations is the first embryo, although, of course, now quite limited by the United States.

There's currently discussion of the idea of an international criminal court. What do the Americans want? That it be under the aegis of the Security Council, where they impose their policies. What do the representatives of many governments and hundreds of organizations represented there want? That it be truly independent so that it can judge, without one country coming along and exercising the veto.

What if somebody's committing war crimes? The United States will veto the trial if it's a friend or an ally. The United States is the country that has most used that prerogative.

And what are war crimes? We have stated that the economic blockade must counted among the most serious war crimes against the people. Yes, let there be an international criminal court. Excellent! But let it be independent and not under the aegis of the Security Council-if they want, under the control of the General Assembly. That would be acceptable.

The Mexican minister said that her country was struggling for more powers for the General Assembly. In fact, the General Assembly has been made worthless. It's almost a talking shop, an institution to shape world opinion and express points of view where one with the right to veto can nullify any agreement adopted by that body. We have to struggle to gain authority for the United Nations General Assembly.

The United States has established a dictatorship in the Security Council, with the right to veto even an agreement adopted by a majority of the Security Council. There could be 10 that agree on something but there's no agreement if the United States says No. There could be nine and it says no; there could be eight and it says no. There could be 14 and there's no agreement because they veto it. They veto any agreement, from eight to 14, because, with only seven, there can be no agreement. Having from eight to 14 in favor of something, they can veto it and that's that. That's clear. They control the Security Council thanks to their economic power, their pressures, and their control of the mechanisms. But they can't control the Assembly, that's more difficult.

We're always urging the countries there too: Unite! To all the Third World countries: Unite! Imperialism deceives. It leads one country along a certain wrong course. It raises expectations for one country while it promises another something else. And, as I said before, it tries to divide the Latin American countries.

The world will need a government; the 21st century will need a government. Who's going to stop them from destroying what's left of nature, of the seas or the air? If the world is globalized and if all the economies become totally intertwined, who's going to govern? The transnationals can't govern. They're at war among themselves-competition, mergers, everything.

The world needs an order. There is need for a universal, global, just and democratic order. There's an order coming, one that can be seen coming at full speed, unstoppable: it's the neoliberalization going global. We have to start thinking about an order of a different kind and, in the meantime, denounce and struggle.

I have great confidence in the peoples and in the masses and that confidence has been strengthened through my experience on international trips, in the United Nations, in meetings like the one in Rio de Janeiro, wherever. The power of the truth can be great and when you get there and speak the truth, then you're saying what the vast majority is thinking but can't say. That's why I say that they have given us now the almost exclusive privilege of being able to speak the truth.

We have a monopoly over the freedom to speak the truth. Many others know the truth but they can't speak out.

I really feel very free to speak. And not only free because I don't just devote myself to speaking the truth it is all part of a strategy. We need more than truth, we need a strategy. Saying what you have to say when you have to say it-not before, not after. Not to divide forces but to bring them together, aware that the main problem is uniting as many as possible around that objective. Not opening up 10 different fronts at a time -the minimum of fronts, preferably one. And there's already one really important front that's enough to concentrate many causes-imperialism, the hegemonic power and its policy of world domination. Well, it's the one that gives orders or wants to tell everybody what they have to do. And many do it; others rebel, others put up resistance. That's how it is.

Mexico's problems, regarding its economic partnership with the United States through the Free-Trade Agreement that you were interested in before are, in my opinion, of a temporary nature, because developments and the unfolding of circumstances will dissolve that kind of agreement into multilateralism, and economic interrelations between countries will prevail. Cuba, which is not on planet Mars, will have to be admitted into all the international institutions, because even the people in the United States are putting up more and more resistance to the whole madness of the blockade against our country. They feel increasingly ashamed. And the world's condemnation of the blockade is unanimous.

We mustn't lose patience-no concessions, not the slightest concession. This country won't make the slightest concession to the blockade. It won't make the slightest concession to the pressures. We'll do what's good for the country, what's good for the revolution, what's good for the people, and under the same principle of unity and consensus.

We'll also have to fulfill our duty to educate our people, because we're faced with these new situations and it's essential that the many people who learned how to read and write understand them. That's why I've talked at great length more than once these days, because what I'm trying to do is get our people to learn and understand more and more.

I remember the first years of the revolution, when we had to convince a lot of people and we sometimes convinced them with revolutionary laws but also by explaining, explaining and explaining.

There are a number of people who don't understand. In the first place, there are people who don't read newspapers, who don't listen to the news, who don't know anything-who go around absent-mindedly. That's why I said recently that there are adults who also need special education. (Laughter.) But the number of those who understand is high and, if they don't understand more, it's our fault, really. We shouldn't blame anyone else.

You wanted to ask a small question? Well, since I've kept you waiting, even if it's only a couple of words, because I have to do other things. I was going to be here for five minutes and you've all kept me much longer.

About the visit by the president of Colombia. Do you want to say something about his visit?

Very good. We're delighted to welcome the president of Colombia. He's the chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. His government has maintained a friendly attitude toward us and, as such, we'll welcome him with full honors and all due consideration.

He's coming for a meeting of public-health ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement. It's an important meeting and he wants to open that meeting. Of course, he's been invited to visit us. After the meeting ends, there will be a brief official visit to our country.

It will be very interesting talking with him, because we're very interested in listening to different points

of view. We're very interested in what's happening in Colombia. You have to learn and you learn by listening, not by talking. By talking, you can exercise your mind a little but, by listening, you gather information, ideas, points of view and you learn. What you listen to is the raw material of what you can work on later in your brain.

We've had a lot of very interesting visits in these past days: the foreign minister of Italy; the president of the Socialist International, [Pierre] Mauroy, a man with great experience. He was prime minister of France. Can you imagine what that visitor knows about Europe, the world and many things, what he thinks, what his views are on these same topics that we're talking about here-Europe, integration, the euro? What is his vision, his points of view, which I try to and need to know?

Zyuganov came recently-a very intelligent man, very well informed. As a representative of an important and influential political force, it's of great interest knowing his points of view on the situation in Russia, a country that really interests us and which we fervently wish can emerge from the crisis and avoid disintegration. That would be terrible.

There are menacing evils and sometimes such evils come quickly. For example, in 30 days, four things occurred: the relapse of the economic crisis in south-east Asia; the political and social crisis in Indonesia; 11 nuclear tests in southern Asia, with the risk of seeing, for the first time, the emergence of the possibility of regional nuclear wars-that danger wasn't there till now; a deep and acute economic crisis in Russia. Four things in 30 days! Well, and these problems are emerging when many other serious problems haven't been resolved yet.

We're very interested in gathering information, opinions. Recently we also had the visit of France's minister of transport. He's a Party member, a communist in a coalition with the Socialists.

The Spanish minister of industries, who also delivered a lecture today in the Assembly Hall, is unquestionably a very able man, very intelligent. It's a delight talking with him. He knows a lot and he is a very serious person.

We've had the privilege of receiving a number of visitors and, of course, we learn from all of them. We don't talk much about Cuba. We say: Look, Cuba's a small island, which is in this hemisphere, not on another planet. And there's no solution for any country in isolation from what happens in the rest of the world. No such solution exists. But we're working hard.

We're very pleased with Samper's visit. He's been very decent toward our country-respectful, friendly-and he'll be welcomed with all honors, as I said. I think that it will be useful for us to know his opinions.

We are familiar with many points of view of Colombians from different political trends. Different personalities visit us. You should not think that the only ones we talk to are those reported by the newspapers. I devote quite a lot of time to talking to many people who don't appear in the press. I'm not in the papers very often and, when I am, it's your fault for always keeping watch on me, chasing after me, forcing me to speak. (Laughter.)

### **What will I do with myself and the appointments I have today?**

A short question, Commander. I know it's completely out of place, but it's to ask you your personal opinion about a mutual friend, a friend that you and I have in common-Silvio Rodríguez.What do you think of Silvio?

I think that question is very badly put, because that's not something you should ask. I consider Silvio to be one of our most distinguished and upright intellectuals and artists. I'm his friend and I'm extraordinarily fond of him. I feel proud that our country has men like Silvio.

Thank you very much. (Applause and exclamations of "Long live the Commander-in-Chief!" and "Long

live the revolution!")

## **Lugar:**

Aula Magna de la Universidad de la Habana

## **Fecha:**

23/06/1998

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.comandanteenjefe.info/en/entrevistas/interview-given-commander-chief-national-and-international-press-assembly-hall?page=0%2C439%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0>