

Fidel Castro Talks with Intellectuals
OUR DUTY IS TO STRUGGLE

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Editorial JOSÉ MARTÍ

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More than Nine Hours Dialoguing with the Infinite

The warmest moments of a cool afternoon on February 10, 2012 when Hall Two at the Havana Convention Center filled with people have by now vanished. In the audience there were 69 visitors from 21 countries and 48 were from Cuba. Most of them were writers who had been invited to the Twenty-First International Havana Book Fair and intellectuals representing diverse academic and scientific disciplines, called together one and all by the Network In Defense of Humanity to take part in a meeting “For Peace and the Preservation of the Environment.”

Around 1:20 that afternoon, the restless and informal dialogue during the wait was replaced by the welcoming applause for the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution. Fidel Castro entered with surprising effervescence and after a friendly gesture of greeting to the group, he took his seat between Abel Prieto, Minister of Culture and Zuleica Romay, President of the Cuban Book Institute (ICL, in its Spanish acronym) and the recipient of the Casa de las Américas award, who introduced the most prominent of the guests and commented about the group in general terms. Then she asked the host what he thought of the audience.

“Infinite,” Fidel replied with a smile, surely imagining how long that conversation might go on with that solid

representation of left-wing intellectuals who, since 2003 and at the initiative of the leader of the Cuban Revolution himself, formed a nucleus in the Network.

The exchange of ideas lasted for more than nine hours, initiated by the ICL president's reflective introduction on the reason for the meeting: to take up again the alarm articulated by Fidel twenty years ago at the Earth Summit about the risk of extinction threatening the human species, today more serious than it was two decades ago.

With the presence of Adolfo Pérez Esquivel of Argentina, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and Sergio Pitol of Mexico, recipient of the 2005 Cervantes Prize, the dialogue revolved around this and other urgent topics. At times the tone was one of noticeable concern in facing the possibility of the extinction of the human species, the depletion of natural resources, the perversion of transnational media corporations and the appearance of artefacts of war and even mind-control, things that nobody could have imagined before, not even in their worst nightmares.

At other moments, humour and hopefulness flooded the atmosphere and all the dreams of the human race seemed to be more than possible, in fact, they seemed to be just around the corner.

Those present found Fidel to be very personal; he received them with the affection that is only bestowed upon cherished companions along the trip through life. He passed on to them his sense of anguish for the future of humankind, but only after having listened to them with the closest of attention. Living sources, where he might quench his insatiable thirst for knowledge; critical spirits, with whom to confirm his most profound worries; while each one of them presented their ideas, we could follow the path the Cuban leader's thoughts were taking by observing his expressions, by that distinctive gesture he has of pointing his index finger to frame his face or to distractedly stroke his beard. More than one participant tried not to take the floor so that they could listen to him and not unduly tax his physical stamina. He would wave his hand in the air, brushing off such proposals, insisting, "I came here to listen to you people..."

Nine hours of conversation, interrupted by two short breaks: that is easy to say, but those of us who have been following the leader of the Cuban Revolution know that those 540 minutes entail the intensity of several libraries and an emotional charge that would last for days and the people living through those minutes would never forget them. “What boundless and privileged memory he has,” we heard Fina García Marruz, recipient of the National Literature Prize commenting. “It is the Fidel we know,” was the admiring comment made by Ignacio Ramonet, author of a voluminous book of interviews with the Commander.

It was precisely Ramonet, the Spanish writer and journalist, who opened up the dialogue with a summary of his words when he received the honorary doctorate at the University of Havana that same morning. Focusing on the practices of the global media system, where information functions as a rare merchandise that is provided for free and is constantly being more trivialized, because the ultimate goal is not to inform but to sell persons to the advertisers, Ramonet’s thesis had the debate revolving around what the intellectuals could and should be doing to avoid a planetary catastrophe, when efforts to move consciences are constantly colliding, as Abel Prieto noted, “against manipulation or silence.”

However, Stella Calloni, the Argentine writer and journalist would make a thrust in the other direction, more introspectively and with self-criticism, by asking for an urgent reactivation of the Network because, she lamented with anguish, “the silence with which Humanity is participating in successive wars is terrifying.”

Almost seven hours later, her words would be echoed by Frei Betto from Brazil who was calling for self-criticism to evaluate “our social insertion” and to generate projects, not just indignation, because indignation did not suffice to resolve global injustice.

At that point, Fidel took the floor, holding up a sheaf of press notices. They were only the news items from the past three days, he warned and proposed to read them and to comment on some of them in order to confirm the gravity of the

alarm that had occasioned this dialogue. More than one hour still remained for the conversation to draw to a close.

“The very least we could be doing is making sure the populace is informed,” said Fidel, proposing that a book be created with all the ideas and proposals provided by the meeting and to be reviewed and augmented by their authors. “We have to fight; this is what we have always done,” he stated as he had many times before, closing with a conviction of permanent rebelliousness, “We cannot let ourselves be defeated by pessimism.”

Havana, February 10, 2012

Meeting Held by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz with Intellectuals and Guests Participating in the Twenty-First International Book Fair in Cuba, at the International Conference Center in Havana on February 10, 2012, “Year 54 of the Revolution”

Commander: Please, take your seats. I am ready.

Abel Prieto: Our idea, Commander, as we discussed, is that comrade Zuleica would first introduce our guests and then outline the essential topics to be discussed at this meeting.

Zuleica Romay: Good afternoon, dear friends.

These friends, Commander, have made a great effort to be here today with us and share these moments with you. Many of them have come for the Book Fair and others were encouraged by us to be here. So, finally, everyone who could, got here.

Here with us there are 69 friends from 21 countries as well as 48 Cuban scientists, academicians, writers, and intellectuals.

Also with us this time are the following comrades:

- Adolfo Pérez Esquivel—Nobel Peace Prize laureate—and his grandson Andrés, and Sergio Pitol—the 2005 Cervantes Prize recipient.
- Intellectuals whose work has contributed in a significant way towards encouraging the best of human values, analyzing the system of imperialist domination, and denouncing the evils affecting today’s world: Santiago, Stella, Frabetti, François Houtart, Frei Betto, Ramonet,

Atilio, Carmen Bohórquez, Peter Phillips, and Mayda Acosta are part of this plenary.

- Important Caribbean writers and intellectuals, representing the cultures invited to our book fair: Norman Girvan, Chiqui Vicioso, Kendel Hippolyte, Alejandro Carpio, Lenito Robinson, Bárbara Chase, Carlos Roberto Gómez, Cynthia Abrahams, Lasana Sekou, Pedro Antonio Valdez, Johan Roozer, and Kari Polanyi Levitt, a scholar specialized on the Caribbean.
- Writers and intellectuals very dear to us, who have accompanied us for years with their friendship and solidarity: Bonasso, Vicente, Colombres, Jorgelina, Juano, Bauer, Marilia, Rodolfo Mendoza, Roberto Culebro, Mary Alice and Jonathan Silberman.
- Erika Silva, José Rafael Lantigua, Lisa Hanna, Godwin Rose, Eleston Adams, and Rosa Maria Cruz e Silva, Ministers of Culture from Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Guyana, Antigua and Barbuda, and Angola, respectively; Farruco Sesto, Minister of State for the Urban Reconstruction of Caracas, Venezuela; Yvette Galot, President of the Committee on Culture of Martinique; and Neri Francisco Romero, Minister of Culture from the province of Chaco, Argentina.
- The members of the Angolan delegation headed by Minister Rosa Maria are also present. They are: Beatriz, Francisco Van Dunem, Francisco Costa, Aguinaldo, Pedro, Ana Clara, Jorge, Cardoso, and Enmanuel.
- Heinz, Harry, Frank, Brigitte, Katja, Andreas, and Marion have arrived from Germany; they have always kept a great bond of friendship with us, overcoming thousands of obstacles.
- Also present are Cuban scientists specialized in economics, energy, and the environment; Cuban writers and intellectuals, headed by our National Prize recipients in Literature, History, and Social Sciences. What do you think about this audience?

Commander: It looks infinite to me (Laughter).

Zuleica Romay: I will now read my words.

Commander, we have been working with these and many other friends on the Network In Defense of Humanity, to mobilize support against the war, for the freedom of our five compatriots, in support of the transformation processes that are taking place in our region, as well as to denounce the causes of environmental degradation and of the irrational living and consumption habits that condition it.

We are working to revitalize this Network, which was created on your initiative in 2003. Tomorrow we are going to hold a workshop in Casa del Alba with Adolfo, Stella, Ignacio, Carmen, François, Santiago, Frabetti, Chiqui, Marilia, and other friends who have been key actors in this endeavor, in order to launch a new webpage (www.especieenpeligro.org) of which sprang up after the meeting you convened last year, very similar to this one. The webpage is still in the making but it has already a lot of information, very good pictures, opinion articles, among which your reflections on the topic stand out; documents from international meetings, videos... All in all, Commander, a lot of valuable information on these matters that can be very useful to the cause of the defense of our ecosystem and the indispensable transformation of the consumer models that mankind has acquired.

Only in the course of this year, Cuban publishers have produced 16 titles on these topics, which are new printed materials conceived for audiences of all ages to be presented at the book fair or used as subjects for exchanges and panel discussion groups.

In last year's meeting, we identified the main problem towards whose solution social thinking and the most progressive forces of humanity must contribute: the survival of the human species—an endangered species, as you warned us almost 20 years ago at the Rio Summit—a battle that shall be pointless if the cultures, values, and knowledge created by mankind throughout all of its history are not preserved.

Of course we are not referring to the skills and know-how placed at the beck and call of domination, genocide, and the domestication of persons; we refer instead to humanistic



Zuleica Romay during her speech, next to the Commander in Chief.

knowledge and socially committed science, the kind that makes mankind the alpha and omega of all its efforts; to ethics and solidarity as the pillars of human relations; to the defense of the cultural identity of communities and peoples; and to the harmonious relationship between Man and Nature.

Capitalist development models are going through a crisis and the consequences for the human species can be catastrophic. At the same time, the media machinery does all it can to make this systemic crisis of capitalism invisible to the majorities. In the first place, an economic and financial crisis, unleashed once again by the selfishness and arbitrariness of the market forces, is razing the world. Joined to this is the ecological crisis, the result of the accelerated deforestation of the planet's forests; the indiscriminate emission of toxic gases, and the pollution of water resources, among other calamities.

The energy crisis has been caused by the life style of the wealthiest countries which, as you predicted on March 7, 2010,

and I quote, “... they will pillage in hardly 100 years the remaining gas, liquid, and solid fuel that nature took 400 million years to create.”¹

At a later date, on January 19, 2011, you warned once again about the food crisis whose victims are by now reaching the incredible figure of one billion people, and I quote, “The production of wheat, soybean, corn, rice, and other numerous grains and legumes which are the staple foodstuffs for the world ... are being seriously affected by climate changes, thus creating a very serious problem in the world.”²

The economy’s ills always have a social impact, but the reach and depth of their negative consequences depend on the nature of the relations that connect them with society. The history of the United States allows us to establish direct connections between the depression at the end of the nineteenth century and the boom in lynching and extra-judicial executions, at the expense of natives, blacks, and other individuals who were classless. The notorious Ku Klux Klan was founded in the U.S. as a result of the resentment of the former slave-owners during the so-called Reconstruction, and the economic debacle that started in 1929 provoked the intensification of racism in that country. It is also easy to note in the literature about the surge of German National Socialism, how the racist messianism catapulting Adolph Hitler to power was fuelled by apprehension and social frustration, exacerbated by the economic depression of the 1930s.

The economic crises, with their negative repercussions in production and consumption, have the effect of making the lives of the most vulnerable social groups precarious; they toughen competition among members of society for access to resources, services, and social policies; and raise up selfish attitudes and feelings for the purpose of preserving or enhancing

1. Fidel Castro Ruz, “The Threatening Dangers,” *Reflections* (Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, Colección 2010, 2010), p. 59.
2. Fidel Castro Ruz, “The Time Has Come to Do Something,” *Reflections* (Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, Colección 2011, 2011), p. 53.

the well-being they have enjoyed so far. On the international scene, the fragility of the economies of quite a few states makes it easy for the powerful to appropriate the natural resources of those countries, enslave the popular sectors, do away with the social achievements attained by the peoples, and impose the interests of the strongest at the international organizations and institutions where the principle of “one country, one vote” continues to be a utopia.

The demagoguery of the super powers of our era cannot hide the fascist ideology that is re-emerging, thereby granting the UN Security Council the dual role of prosecutor and judge, which legitimizes newly-minted bombings, invasions, and territorial conquests.

The oppressive combination of the economic, ideological, and military powers of the empires, assisted by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and NATO, among other imperialism’s emblematic institutions, would like to control the hard-working and pacifist majority, that 80 per cent of humanity that possesses little and is losing more everyday. The consequences are in sight: some of those that are still recognized by the imperial domination as States, are less sovereign every day. Those are countries whose patrimonies have been dwindled by the rapacity of transnationals; whose governments, with unconcealed impotence, are witnessing the increase of the illiterate, the hungry, the unemployed, and the homeless; that is, the hopeless.

At the same time, the mass media, cartelized and to the service of a hardly visible, yet omnipresent, minority, carry on with its mission of instilling values, codes, and symbols that are supposedly universal. A little more than a hundred years ago, when the first advertising agencies sprang up in the United States, the dream of capitalism was to standardize consumption even at the cost of distributing ever more futile and expensive products. After idolizing commercial brands and turning them into a kind of gospel of modernity, the task of the moment is to homogenize the different perceptions of reality, personal aspirations and goals, political opinions and aesthetic criteria; in other words, the sense of life.

Just as it happens in the predictable detective stories plots, where the killer is holed up in the house to massacre its dwellers, the world slumbers, still trusting, while keeping under its bed more than enough weapons to cause its own destruction. The 25,000 nuclear warheads that are threatening our slumber remain closely guarded in the military facilities of only eight countries. All we need is a confrontation between two of those powers to make the Nuclear Winter nightmare real.

New wars of conquest and pillage are looming in the Middle East.

In Sub-Saharan Africa—which the mass media tend to remember when referring to armed conflicts of presumed ethnic origin—, entire populations are being exterminated by curable diseases and life expectancy at birth does not exceed 48 years of age. The Palestinians whom the Zionists have not been able to exterminate return to their homes day by day after fighting the genocidal Israeli machinery.

Also struggling to win 24 hours more of life are kids who live on the streets; the Afro-Americans and Latino immigrants who are purging on death row the social disadvantages resulting from their origin; the homeless; the mothers and grandmothers who persist in searching for their disappeared relatives; the ill who long for the transplants that they cannot afford; and many others, citizens of presumably educated and civilized countries who stand up to the siege imposed on their consciences by a vast array of cultural products that motivate alienation and violence.

War threatens us all because this ever more unjust and insecure world is being besieged by the only thinking species that inhabits it. Just as you have stated, Commander, and I quote, “The greatest contradiction in our times is, precisely, the ability of the human species to destruct itself and its inability to govern itself.”³

The Earth is home to all the men, women, and children who inhabit it. We have no right to bequeath to our children

3. Fidel Castro Ruz, “The Insanities of Our Time,” *Reflections* (Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, Colección 2010, 2010), p. 90.

landscapes without trees that forebodes the planet's slow suffocation; wastelands where the search for water is part of the struggle for survival and where five thousand people die everyday for drinking water from polluted sources; fishing areas depleted by extraction rates that wildly surpass the natural reproduction rates of species; summers that are increasingly warmer alternating with winters that are increasingly colder; and low-lying lands flooded by the seas, whose levels are constantly rising.

We have no right to condemn the 2 billion human beings who will be born during the next 40 years to hopelessness and to live under skies stained by millions of tons of polluting gases and a sun that seems less shining every day.

Thank you very much (Applause).

Commander: Aren't you going to say anything?

Abel Prieto: Excellent words, Commander.

Commander: I find the summary made by the comrade extraordinary.

Abel Prieto: And it gives continuity to that conversation we all had with you one year ago.

Commander: Besides, she has briefly summarized everything; she hasn't left anything out.

What are we going to do to have this circulated?

Abel Prieto: I'd publish the full text. We should publish the full text, Commander; perhaps it could be published in our press. What do you think? And we could also post it on the web.

Commander: Is there any book or a similar media where this could be published?...

Abel Prieto: It could be distributed over the Internet.

Commander: By the method you explained the other day?

Abel Prieto: Well, that's rather for online book sales.

Commander: Could it be linked up with some book?

Abel Prieto: We'll have to think about it; I don't know.



From left to right: Abel Prieto Jiménez, Fidel Castro Ruz, and Zuleica Romay Guerra.

Commander, when you called me today before I left to attend this meeting... The Commander asked me what I had done this morning, which is a question that always takes me by surprise (Laughter). But, fortunately, I could tell him something that was meaningful to him, which is that I had attended a very lovely ceremony at the Aula Magna where Ignacio Ramonet was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa in Social Communication (Applause).

Commander: He would like you to repeat something of what you said this morning; he was very much impressed.

Abel Prieto: I was telling the Commander that everything Zuleica said... what does it clashes with? It clashes with everything our comrades here today are clashing with every day, which is the silence of the big media.

Commander: I think it's a unanimous thought; I was thinking of that. Everything is clear, evident, and undeniable. Let us listen to Ramonet.

Ignacio Ramonet: First of all, Commander, I'd like to tell you how happy I feel, and I think that, in a way, I express the feelings of many of us, if not all, who are here today, to see you are so well, so recovered, and in excellent health (Applause).

Commander: It must be the influence of all of you (Laughter).

Ignacio Ramonet: Exactly, and I am also sure that Abel has made for you a summary that is much better than what I am going to say right now.

Commander: He hasn't had any time to do so; he'll be telling me later.

Ignacio Ramonet: He has great imagination (He laughs).

Commander: But, is it all written out?

Abel Prieto: No, he ad-libbed.

Ignacio Ramonet: I have a few notes here.

Commander: But, is there any written work?

Ignacio Ramonet: There is a short book, in fact; it's going to be published; yes, there it is.

Abel Prieto: It is already published; it's out at the Fair.

Ignacio Ramonet: Yes, I already sent it to you, Commander. Anyway, you didn't receive it; it got lost on the way.

Abel Prieto: No, he must have it.

Commander: I haven't read it yet. When did it arrive?

Abel Prieto: Zuleica brought me this one just this morning.

Commander: Ah! That's good.

Abel Prieto: It's being presented this Sunday.

Commander: So, when was it published?

Zuleica Romay: We finished it yesterday.

Commander: This one?

Zuleica Romay: This one, the Cuban edition. Ramonet sent us his book.

Ignacio Ramonet: Yes; I sent it as soon as it came out.

Commander: I feel guilty for not having read it.

Zuleica Romay: We published a Cuban edition, which is that one.

Commander: Great!

Ignacio Ramonet: This morning in the Aula Magna I mentioned two or three ideas about how the media system works. What the Commander and Abel were discussing here right now was the idea that when we are faced with such a strong reality, with all the interesting data that Zuleica has given us, why aren't all these data and analyses finally published?

I think it's interesting to have an idea about how the media system works—in a very sketchy way; I don't intend to give a lecture here. I will simply refer to two or three notes.

First, we have to start from the principle that nowadays, in the media system, information works as merchandise. Information is merchandise, we know that. But, what does this assertion mean? Because it is a rather peculiar merchandise in the sense that it is free merchandise. Most of us consume information through radio or TV, and we do not pay for it. Besides, right now there are lots of free newspapers and we don't pay for that information that is published in the written press either. On the Internet, most of the information sites are also free.

So, let's say, how is it that such a system, which is so concerned about profits, makes it possible for that information to be circulating free of charge? It is free for the following reason: because we think that the information commerce consists in selling information to people and, obviously, figures do not add up, because if I sell the information free of charge, I mean, if I give information away, I am not earning anything. In fact, the information commerce mechanism does not consist in selling information to people; it consists in selling people to advertisers.

When we are consuming information, we are being sold to advertisers. And so, what does that mean? What does that mean from the ontological point of view, from the point of view



Ignacio Ramonet

of its content? It means this: the company that is going to sell us to the advertisers wants the people who are going to consume that information to be as numerous as possible. In other words, the larger their numbers, the more expensive this group of people will be sold to the advertiser. So, for this number to be large indeed, the information level should be very superficial. That is the equation, if you like: First of all, the information is going to be published in a very limited language. For example, Spanish is a language with more than 40,000 words; but the information that is widely circulated is written with some 600 to 800 words, that is to say, in a basic Spanish, reduced to its bare minimum.

Second, any information, whatever it may be, is always a piece of sophisticated, complex information, with nuances, etc.

The prevailing information system is a Manichean information system. In other words, there are good and bad news and, consequently, information is given in two terms, in a very elemental way, so that any further development to be made has to be very short, very brief so that anyone could understand it; therefore all kinds of nuances are edited out and, obviously, there will be an emphasis on the emotional aspect—which is what people talk about—and not so much on the rational system that presupposes the perception of concepts and abstractions. In that sense, a piece of news that conveys a great amount of information should not be abstract and conceptual; it should be concrete and emotional. That is one aspect. You can already see the consequences resulting from the fact that information is merchandise.

The second important consequence is that if a company is going to give away information, it is obvious that that company is not going to spend much money to produce it, since it is going to give it away.

Therefore, the production of information, that is to say, the survey, the work you have to do further upstream to find information, to look for it, to go beyond appearances, to try to discover where that information is to be found, to pay a team of journalists so that they can do months of research, that is something the company is not going to do, or it's going to do less and less to the extent that it continues to give away that information—I emphasize that.

Also, for that second reason, the level of information will obviously be reduced; the level of information is going to be lowered. This is the system in which we work; and the Internet has worsened the crisis from the point of view of the economics of the information. In other words, in today's world, most of the mass media groups are going through a crisis. They have some sectors, particularly the written press sector, where they are losing money. Therefore, now is not the time to produce top-quality information.

Another thing is that, in spite of what I have just said, that information functions as merchandise—that is to say, it functions according to the laws of supply and demand—, it does not function according to the laws of communication and information. In fact, this is not about answering such questions as ‘what can and should be done in terms of a discerning journalism?’ it is simply about responding to an alleged demand. But despite the fact that information circulates as merchandise, today it is actually a raw material; it functions exactly as a raw material in the broadest sense of the term.

Why is it a raw material? It is a raw material in the sense that the big information companies today are the ones that are earning more money. Just take a look at, let’s say, the last 15 years. What sector do the big companies, the new big companies, those which have accumulated an exceptionally high stock market capital, belong to? They belong to the Internet sector.

Look, Facebook’s entry into the stock market was posted at 15 billion dollars. When Google entered the stock market just three years ago, it posted its entry at around 4 billion dollars; so was the case for the telephone companies or the information sciences companies. In other words, all those companies, Facebook, Twitter, Google, as well as the big international telephone companies, the information sciences companies, such as Apple, all of these companies, could not care less about content or the meaning of content. What they do care about is quantity. That is to say, a telephone company does not care if you are going to transmit a State secret in your phone call; that’s something that might be of interest for the CIA. What the telephone company cares about is that you make a lot of phone calls and send a lot of messages by telephone. The more messages you send through the phone—whether text messages or voice messages, icon messages, with pictures, with videos—, the more money the company will make. The more communications, in the broad sense of the term, the more money the company will earn. In that sense, information is a raw material, and it will be a strategic raw material as long as it is the one that allows people to earn

greater profits than the ones obtained from some really strategic raw materials such as oil, gas, or uranium, among others. These companies can make more money simply through our phone calls.

This is the universe of communication in which, the media groups today are obviously tending to organize through the well-known concentration system. While they used to specialize in one single communication sector, let's say, for example, written communication, now, thanks to the Internet, which has broken the technical barriers that existed between the different communication systems, the groups are going to monopolize written, oral, visual, audiovisual communication and, obviously, the Internet. Then, the large groups are dominating this sector by resorting to concentration.

Speaking about concentration in communication and information is like speaking automatically about the end of pluralism or the difficulties faced by pluralism. While there used to be many media groups or many media clusters in the past, now there are fewer because they have concentrated, and in some countries—I simply take France as an example—, all the main communication media: press, radio, television, the Internet belong to a handful of businessmen—almost always they are men, but they could be women—, most of them connected either to the financial sector or the telephone information sector, informatics, etc., and they can be counted on the fingers of one hand in a country like France, a great democratic country and a producer of culture. In other words, the concentration phenomenon is being worsened by the crisis.

Besides, how does communication works within the context of globalization. What is globalization all about? It is essentially a phenomenon that obviously brings along others with it—and I am speaking to all of you who know perfectly well how it is. I will simply remind you that globalization is essentially a financial phenomenon, based on the fact that for some years now, money has been allowed to circulate freely, without any obstacle whatsoever. It is money that circulates without any obstacle, and based on that phenomenon, the idea that economic power is precisely the first power, and that the

financial power within it is the one that produces the greatest objective and material wealth in the world, is consolidating.

Now then; what about media power? What role does media power play within the globalization system? That's where I say that media power within globalization can only be conceived of as the twin brother of the financial power. Why? Because within globalization, media power has the function of telling citizens who are supportive of globalization that, in fact, they are living in the best of all possible worlds. In other words, media power functions as the ideological apparatus of globalization. What I mean to say is that globalization is a material and concrete phenomenon, but, to a certain degree, it requires the conspiratorial passivity of the citizenry. And, who has the mission of appeasing and domesticating societies? The media apparatus.

This morning I was giving an example through a comparison. Comparisons are never accurate, but I said, What do we mean by ideological apparatus? For example, we are in the Americas. Let us imagine the time of the Conquest. What was the Conquest? Above all, it was a violent enterprise of destruction, the destruction of cultures, peoples, religions, languages, and social hierarchies. That machinery of destruction would have obviously functioned by raising greater resistance if it were only an enterprise of destruction; but, in fact, that enterprise of conquest was accompanied by an ideological apparatus whose mission was to tell the victims of the Conquest that what was happening was really the best that could happen to them. Who was supposed to accomplish that mission? Well, in this case, the Catholic Church, the evangelists. The evangelists said to the victims of the Conquest, "You have lost your religion, you have lost your traditions, you have lost your cultural references, but you have gained glory, because you have found the true God." Right?

Thus, globally speaking, the media apparatus has to accomplish the same task with us today. Right now in Greece, there is a general strike; it is the umpteenth general strike against the austerity and adjustment policies and the social brutality that are being imposed in many European countries.

And the media power, tied in to the financial power, which has perpetrated financial coups d'état—as you have seen in Italy and Greece, where precisely the prime minister has been installed by the bank—is telling the Greeks, “In fact, you have to do this willingly; you have to sacrifice yourselves, because that sacrifice means that we will finally get to a new start that is going to allow us to save the country.” This is then a situation where the financial power and the media power are the dominating twins in society.

So you may ask: What about political power? In today's hierarchy of power, political power ranks the third. In other words, within the context of globalization, the financial power and the media power dominate the political power.

There are several examples. If you were to tour Europe today from one country to another, you would see that, at times, most of the media are ferociously criticizing the leaders of any country. If you were to go to Portugal, you will see that they are criticizing the Portuguese prime minister; in Spain, they criticize the Spanish prime minister; in France, they criticize the French president, and so on. And it wasn't like that before.

So, the question is, “Hey, do the media have more freedom today than before? Why don't they have any qualms about criticizing the political leaders?” Well, here the answer is also no; the media do not have more freedom than before. What is happening is that political leaders have less power than before and, obviously, the media today are taking advantage of the weakening of political power and the absence of political will to launch their attack in the name of the goals that the financial power has set for itself.

And I will conclude by saying that the “fourth power” today is going through a crisis. Before, the “fourth power” was the press. We can not think about a modern democracy without a “fourth power.” There is a legislative power, an executive power, and a judicial power, and there's also the public opinion that used to redress the excesses incurred into by the judicial power or the legislative power or the executive power. Ever since the invention of the mass media at the close of the

nineteenth century, public opinion is a very important actor within modern democracies. It is impossible to think about the functioning of a modern democracy without a public opinion as a counter-weight. But that counter-weight has ceased to exist to the extent that public opinion, more than ever before, is being manufactured by the large media groups. Therefore there is no public opinion which is, let's say, objective. I think that this is the time to say it—and I have proposed this in several of my papers, especially at the World Social Forum—that a fifth power should be created, which is the possibility the Internet or the social networks gives us today, for each one of us to create our own information, to participate in the information making process as never before, even though we do not believe in the general democratization of information. But, today, we have the tools that allow us to intervene, to introduce modifications, to give an opinion, not just in a passive and discreet way, but through our participation at a more general level. And it is precisely these tools that allow us to take a stand as citizens, as a fifth power capable of providing the counter-weight to that superpower that has been recently constituted.

This is what I said, Commander (Applause).

Abel Prieto: Commander, today when we were chatting, I was interested in this topic, because all the endeavors of the Network of Networks—we have talked many times about this, Stella knows that—collide either with silence or manipulation; they permanently collide with silence and manipulation. All these media have designed an inflexible agenda.

Today Ignacio Ramonet was saying, “Politicians are being criticized, but nobody criticizes the great financial power; nobody criticizes the real masters of the planet.” That's true.

Commander: You have to know them to be able to criticize them.

Abel Prieto: Exactly. Would anyone, any friend like to say something?

François Houtart: Thank you.

Yes, following up on what Ignacio has said, I think it's very important also to develop ensemble thinking to con-

front the different aspects of the crisis about which our friend Zuleica spoke: the need to just reconstruct a new paradigm that would be an ensemble thinking, to be able to build this fifth power. And that's the reason why I think that one of the things we should be doing is thinking about what concepts we can use to reconstruct ensemble thinking so that it would include, simultaneously, the various aspects of the struggles that we are waging today for a new interaction with nature, for a different type of economy, for a generalized democracy, and for an intercultural approach; and also a concept that could also serve as the basis for the unity of all struggles, thus giving fundamental meaning to every one within the ensemble.

It is a matter which I am trying to work on, which is the idea of the Common Good for Humanity, which is also expressed by the indigenous peoples of Latin America as the art of living well. We ought to work on this so that we may give some coherence to all types of thinking and also to all different struggles, because in pursuing this goal we should be clearer every time and build a type of thinking that allows us to bring together all the aspects of today's struggles (Applause).

Stella Calloni: How are you, Commander? We were really looking forward to seeing you.

I wanted to say that we have before us another topic: just as Ignacio Ramonet said that information was merchandise, I say that information today is also a weapon. It is the first shot that paves the way for the war. Information shapes up the elements for the psychological war, which falls into the category of low-intensity conflicts, or what today is called counter-insurgency, a phenomenon that we are not studying either, especially when it comes to its application in present times. And I think that using information as a weapon is extremely serious. It is extremely serious that we allow information to be used that way, because in that case, words can kill. Information becomes then a deadly weapon.

We know that misinformation is behind every war, as we have recently seen in the case of Libya or in the case of Iraq; we have seen it throughout our history. What happens nowadays

is that there has been a replication of the same with the use of new technologies.

So, what can we do to fight against that? The Internet is not enough; that's the problem. We have access to the information, but most of the peoples are captives of the media. There is a sector of the population that has access to the Internet, but the majority doesn't. We are always facing that problem.

I am going to give you an example: The almost absolute majority of the media did not broadcast the war in Libya as it truly was; a colonial war; an imperial war. That is the situation that we are facing. But, on the opposite side, very few media confronted the unique and manipulative discourse of the hegemonic power, which spoke about a humanitarian invasion to save the Libyan people when, in fact, it was genocide against that people.

These facts were very much silenced by those who had to speak up and set an example to the world in the face of this injustice. I am speaking about the terrifying silence of humanity when there are genocides after genocides. There have been three already in the twenty-first century. There was genocide in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Today, the genocide in Libya continues. We are receiving details about the horrible things that continue to occur in Libya and the denunciations of crimes and tortures made by humanitarian agencies and Médecins sans Frontières. The NATO mercenaries have destroyed entire black populations; so is the case for the township of Tawerga.

All these things have occurred, but now it so happens that there are some people who blame Gadaffi for the invasion. This is like the case of a raped woman who is looking for justice and is asked by some judges if she was wearing a short skirt (meaning if she was dressed provocatively), as if she were to blame for her own raping. It is a tough comparison, but it is very accurate. Then, there are attempts to justify these wars, and we can not allow that to happen.

It is impossible to be confused. Our responsibility is even greater because we have gone through all of that: invasions, coup d'états, market coups, and destabilizations. We have to be very careful and see to it that our words do not support the expansive and criminal colonial projects that are threatening us.

We are faced with a great responsibility; there are demands that we must respond to in a very strong and determined way. Some of us referred here to the fifth power of information, and it is up to us to see to it that this fifth power is felt and act as a counter-hegemonic power in a permanent way.

If we accept the notion that information is a weapon, then we have to study it thoroughly and know how to handle it. We should also know how a war of occupation and appropriation of resources is prepared using the mass media to try to provide a justification that does not exist. A “humanitarian” war against a people that is obviously inferior in the face of the alliances of the big powers is a colonial war. That manipulation of the true objectives by the hegemonic media is aimed at influencing the conscience of peoples and the general public opinion with the purpose of paralyzing them. The public opinion takes on and incorporates the only word it receives, because there is no other.

Some networks help to disseminate the other side of the truth. Others are not exempted from confusion. It is a way out. However, there is another aggravating circumstance. If we analyze this historical period, we will realize that the possibility to influence the world populations not only through information but also through entertainment has never been broader and stronger.

This last topic is very important and is not usually addressed. It is the one that affects people the most and degrades cultures the most. Entertainment, some of which is made for children, is extremely violent. They have managed to capture a significant amount of people and turned them into indifferent and uninterested persons.

Misinformation in Europe is an example we never discuss. We also talked about it with Ramonet and others. I visited Germany and other European countries during the early days of the year 2011, and I noticed that people there were hardly informed about events that happen in the world. There is a unique media discourse. The majority of the population knows nothing. They were so oblivious of what in fact was being done by their own governments—except for the most enlightened sectors of

society—that they really didn’t even know the truth about the wars they were taking part in. They ignored the truth about serious human rights violations, such as the existence of secret prisons, the crimes committed in the countries that had been invaded, or the possible collapse of the welfare state and the European Union. They didn’t even realize that Europe was imploding.

I believe this is one of the most serious moments of that spiral of disinformation. We are witnessing that in our respective countries. All of these elements combined have led to the terrifying silence of a humanity that does not react. Fear can be paralyzing. Humanity does not react. In the past, some people did react. So, what has happened this time?

Last year you posed before us a key idea, a demand. Somehow you said to us that humanity was walking towards an abyss. You gave us staggering figures and data, and told us about the disillusionment towards the politicians that had washed their hands of the environmental problems that are threatening us. You talked to us about the consequences of wars and asked us to work on that, to pave the way and help to raise the awareness of humanity. And then, a war broke out and we were absent from the solidarity with those peoples that were being trampled upon and invaded. And, who are governing them right now? The mercenaries; the criminals. We left them alone in the hands of the criminals. If we can not stop the war, this is going to turn against us.

Recently, President Evo Morales submitted a proposal to discuss the participation of mercenaries in the wars of these times, in the destabilization of governments. The issue was put to the vote at the United Nations. Latin America and other countries—with very few exceptions—voted against the presence of mercenaries. The United States, Europe and Israel voted in favor, because the mercenaries are their fortune soldiers, their private armies and the criminals used by NATO. They are euphemistically called ‘contractors.’ All this is happening in silence. With no reaction. We also have to review the ONU matter, because is no longer representing the countries it should represent and defend. I believe that intellectuals must react much faster. Besides, must criticize ourselves

in our condition as Networks of Intellectuals In Defense of Humanity. This Network was created and was working very well, but now there has been silence. I can't see that we have done anything about the genocides and these colonial wars. Peoples are being ferociously killed and we remain silent.

I must realize that we are in a war; we are being threatened by the real possibility of a third world and nuclear war. We are not living an idyllic situation. Faced with that reality, our approach should be different; it must be different.

We have to face the fact that information is already part of the design of war and counterinsurgency. We can't be all the time at the defensive. We should get together first. We must attack; we should be at the offensive. Besides, we are hardly at the defensive because we do not have the means to act.

I set Telesur as an example, because if Telesur had not been competing with and challenging the big TV networks that repeat *en masse* the discourse of the hegemonic power, we wouldn't have known anything about what was happening in Libya; how the black population was being massacred under the pretext that they were African mercenaries to the service of Gadaffi, when they were in fact Libyan citizens. We wouldn't have known anything about what was happening in Lebanon when Israel attacked that country. We wouldn't have known anything about the Latin American peoples that are now able to watch that TV channel.

The correspondents did a very courageous work and denounced and said what they should say, while the rest—who were working for the invading military power—kept silent and lied, thus adopting a criminal attitude.

We have the Internet, we have access to networks, but that access does not have a mass character. I think these times are different, quite different from the times we lived before, and I think that the intellectuals can no longer keep silent, and I mean never, never again. We have to set our goals and say: Here, never again!

We have taken too long to react, and it is our duty to act in order to stop these wars. That is our role. We have the possibilities and sufficient capability. This problem can not be

solved by simply writing. We should write and denounce; it is not simply about sending messages to each other, signing protest communiqués, which have been non-existing in this case. I had said it before in the former meeting: intellectuals should be on the side of the peoples; they should come out of their crystal vaults and be present at the trade unions, the universities and the neighborhoods. That is their revolutionary role in the present times. We have the example set by you (Cuba). You knew that the media owned by the powerful were not going to publish anything about the Revolution, so you reported through other means.

Let us look for the right formulas; we must be much more creative. This is the continent of imagination, and it is impossible that we act with so little imagination.

I think we have to stay very much alert. We are seeing how Europe is imploding and we have to analyze what was the U.S. involvement in that. The Europeans began to intervene in wars that were not of their making. They believed that they were going to keep everything. They intervened in Libya, but the one that stayed there was the United States, which recently sent 12,000 soldiers to Libya to look after the oil wells. It is the United States the one that is administering and selling the oil and products of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is the United States the one that imposes the colonial governments? And, where is Europe? Like voracious capitalists, they fell into a trap and are dragging other peoples with them.

I think we all have to wake up from this long dream; we are just napping. You can't nap when there is a war. I think this is a time when we need to speak with a strong and straightforward language. There is no need to resort to euphemisms or vague approaches. The Network of Intellectuals must go on to perform a much more active role right now. This is not about writing little letters, but dissemination what should be said. I had been discussing this with Marilia Guimarães from Brazil. We are a kind of feisty women, but anyway, there we go.

So what we want to say is that we have to talk about this in more depth. Situations like this can not happen again. What happened in Libya cannot happen ever again, because we have



Stella Calloni

already seen how the same intervention pattern is being applied in Syria and Iran. And, unfortunately, silence goes on.

We have to rethink everything that we have been talking about and what you told us, Commander, last year. And we have to know more about each one of our peoples.

We should look ourselves in the mirror of Africa, which is being occupied, re-colonized. There is an attempt to establish the U.S. AFRICOM in Libya. Gadaffi refused to give the permission and also because of that Libya was invaded. And nobody speaks about that.

So, where is this silence taking us to? That same pattern of control and imperial re-colonization is being applied to other

regions and it's going to come down on us in the same way. And then, will everybody keep silent as they are now? No; we must break this silence and this is our prime, revolutionary and immediate obligation: to break the silence and refute lies. There is an urgent need to do that (Applause).

Commander: I wanted to point out that what you are saying is being recorded, and the first thing we have to do is to check it thoroughly and print a book with this material; that's how we can get it out quickly, and not just over the Internet. I'm trying to see what each of you wants to say, in the midst of a tough situation, a difficult situation, and we are wondering what to do. I think there are ways of responding.

While Ramonet was speaking, and when you were mentioning Telesur; I was thinking of Venezuela and what is happening there at this time; I was also thinking of Syria and the imperialism's plans in that country. The news are ever more shameless and confirm what is being said here. Besides, they themselves are feeling insecure. Don't you think for a minute that they are in control; they are trying to impose their will, but they are not in control. The most dangerous thing in the Middle East at this time is that nobody knows what can happen there; neither the President of the United States nor Panetta or Netanyahu can know. And each of them has his own plans.

Today a news cable stated that the Israelis were testing some anti-aircraft weapons which they had developed in cooperation with the United States. They believe that if the Iranians launch an attack, they can neutralize it. They are measuring everything and they have come close to a limit that is incompatible with peace.

If you were to analyze the October Crisis now, you will notice a change. By that time, the OAS was condemning only us. It condemned us and admitted everything that happened in Guatemala, Chile, and Cuba. The situation was worse then because only a few of us knew about it. Now, at least a select group of prestigious intellectuals knows what is happening. What were the criteria back then? They were divisions here and there. Today everyone is thinking with freedom about what to do and how to do it; but we are not totally lacking in

resources. They have less control over the forces and phenomena that they have unleashed, and that's what is so dangerous because we must ask ourselves: how much time do we have to fix it? Before, nobody asked how much time there was for that. What does the United States think? What is the opinion of the people who are running all that there? What does Russia think? What does China think? What does India think? What does Pakistan think? What do they want? What does Turkey think? This is one of the questions that are being asked these days and there are some who have predicted that Turkey will be the country that will be playing a leading role in the aggression against Syria.

And so, what does Ban Ki-moon say? What does the UN say? What is the opinion of the people who should be concerned about these problems on behalf of the world? What do the members of the Security Council say? Are they going to believe what is being said there? Each one of them is required to make a speech and they have a confrontation there.

In the midst of that situation, I think that we will wage that battle with the truth in our hands, because it is not only about having the truth, or being able to disseminate it one way or another; it is about how strong that truth is. And there are no antecedents because we are facing an entirely new situation.

I think that now we should be aware of that. Let everyone now check his or her own contribution; Abel will record everything and will have it printed. Since we are in a hurry, there's no need to rush (Laughter).

Abel Prieto: Commander, just one comment about something that Stella was saying. I don't really feel that the intellectuals on the Network have remained silent. Every day I read hundreds of articles of great importance written by many of you, including Stella, who are fighting against barbarity; but, what happens? Those articles are not published by the media that shapes up opinions; that is a fact.

The truth is that sometimes we feel that the calls for action are a little bit worn out; but for us that call for action that you

signed in 2003 was very important. In Miami, in the year 2003, there were people saying, “Iraq today, Cuba tomorrow.” The tanks were rolling in; the resistance had not yet started in Iraq. It was a triumphal march, and CNN was embedded there, like the evangelists during the Conquest, as Ignacio Ramonet mentioned. I mean, at such a dangerous moment, all of you signed that call for action; and the fact that Pablo González Casanova was to read it—he was to come but he wasn’t able to—at the Revolution Square, had a tremendous importance.

No call for action is going to stop a war; we know that. The only public opinion that a U.S. president fears is the United States’ public opinion. Perhaps one of the deficiencies of the Network, and I think we have not really worked enough on that—tomorrow there will be a workshop at 6:00 P.M. in the Casa del ALBA; Stella will be there and we are going to work hard there with this new webpage; we will all be thinking about what we can do together—, is that we should reach out more to the sectors that can shape up an opinion within the United States. At a certain point we made some progress, but it’s true that we haven’t been creative enough. Stella is right, Commander. Some of us even have to become more literate in social networks. There are some us who are not sufficiently trained.

Today in Cuba we are working very hard, we have a lot of revolutionary bloggers; there are people who are working on the social networks. I see Enrique Ubieta sitting over; he has just presented a book on the Cuban reality that looks really interesting to me. He has a blog and uses Twitter. This is an area where I am a true-blue “Gutenbergist”; by that I mean that I belong to the Gutenberg galaxy, as it is called, and I don’t have that kind of training. It is necessary to learn that. We have to learn how to use the social networks, not to fool around and waste our time like the immense majority of the people using the social networks. We should use them discuss ideas.

We also have the enormous problem of the limited bandwidth, as well as the restrictions in the use of the Internet limitations which we have not been able to resolve because of the very policy of the Yankees.

Now, Stella, it seems to me that people are not apathetic nor they are silent. I think that we are simply fenced in by those large media corporations that do not include in their agendas anything that may go against the hegemonic interests. They just don't do it and they will never post a single rebuttal.

Right now they lied with regard to a man who died, who was a common prisoner, a man from the municipality of Contramaestre, who was recruited here before going to trial for having battered his wife. He had been formerly indicted and had confronted the police.

Well, before going to trial, that man was recruited by the counter-revolution. They even invented a hunger strike, and all of a sudden we had a martyr, and the PP from Spain, the Chilean government, and some European governments, besides the PP started to make statements, "And, what about the human rights in Cuba? What about that martyr?" So then we decided to publish everything about the case; we even published the medical reports, every single detail, the statements made by the guy's relatives. Now, nobody publishes a rebuttal; nobody is going to publish a rebuttal! The headlines stated that a martyr had died in Cuba because of his ideas. This was really a very primitive, very violent man; a common prisoner and, all of a sudden, he was turned into a martyr.

Commander: Abel, and if they do publish it, it won't be as an important piece of information; it will just be a single line, a cable. They are very subtle in the experience of what they let through the sieve. Sometimes to give the appearance of objectivity they will publish a news item about the adversary; they can do that. But when you watch Telesur you realize the serious work they do, and you know that there is a country that can at least send some satellites up into the sky, that can reach out here and there. That is a channel that does not show any commercials, and when they do, they aren't about products, but to announce programs that are going to be aired. Well, I got used to listening to it, and sometimes I have to turn it off because I have other things to do, but I watch it whenever I can. They show pictures, images, they have studied the problem and they are increasingly watched.

Abel Prieto: The events in Honduras. How would we have known about the events in Honduras if it hadn't been for Telesur?

Commander: Now they are trying to prevent Telesur from being watched in certain places; they are trying to prevent it from being watched in Peru, but it is being watched in Peru; they are trying to prevent it from being watched in Brazil, but it is being watched in Brazil; they are trying to prevent it from being watched in such and such a place, or such and such a state in Brazil. They are dealing with that right now.

Marilia Guimarães: First of all, I would like to congratulate the Commander for being so well recovered, looking healthy, and for that we are very happy.

Commander: But I can't manage to have the tea look like tea (Laughter).

Marilia Guimarães: In the first place, I'd like to give you a big hug on behalf of Oscar Niemeyer (Applause), who is always thinking of you.

Commander: Excuse me if I made you wait too long to take the floor.

Marilia Guimarães: He is always interested in knowing whether you have put on some weight, how many kilos, I don't know how many kilos, and I always make up something like 12, 15, 10 kilos.

Commander: I'm against that; the doctors want me to put on some weight and I don't want to.

Marilia Guimarães: No; but in his mind, you are a very tall man, and he is very short; for him, to put on weight makes a really big difference.

Commander: But I always envy slim persons; that's what we need in the world; there are people who put on too much weight... I'm not going to talk about any specific country.

Marilia Guimarães: This morning he called me to find out whether I was here, whether I had seen you already and whether you were well, and I told him, "Yes, he is in great shape, par-

tying on all over the place.” He’s the one who is partying on, at his age of 104, and so he wants to know how you are doing, and I tell him, “Listen, he’s launching books.” He says, “Ah, bring me the books.” I told him, “Of course I’ll bring you the books.”

Commander: The other day I was told that he’s very lucid and working.

Marilia Guimarães: Yes, he’s very lucid. He only complains about some back pains.

Commander: But, I was told he was 102, is that so?

Marilia Guimarães: He is 104 and two months old.

Commander: It’s amazing how years pass by! One hundred and four! Why doesn’t he have his genes studied to know why he’s lived so long?

Marilia Guimarães: Oh, no; he asks, “How is the kid doing? How’s the boy?” And the boy is you.

Commander: So, I’m the boy (Laughter and Applause).

Marilia Guimarães: Sure, because, just imagine, at the age of 104 he can be your father; no problem that he could be your father. Oscar loves you very much. He admires you as a great Latin American leader. He has you as an example in his life.

Commander: Of course. I couldn’t be his grandson, but I could be his son. He could have been my father long ago, since he was 19.

Marilia Guimarães: I think he is going to live to be 112, 120; if he were to live here, he would live to be 120, but he is afraid of planes and so it becomes very complicated.

Commander: No, that’s right; he can’t stand airplanes. How did he build that university over there in Constantinople? Has he ever travelled by plane? I would say he has not even travelled in the modern planes that are said to be so safe.

Marilia Guimarães: No, not at all. He doesn’t even go to Brasilia. He won’t even think of it, it’s too dangerous. All he wants is wine and women (Laughter).

Commander: That's why he doesn't want to die.

Marilia Guimarães: Well, that is just to relax a little bit.

So, Commander, I echo the words spoken by Ignacio, Stella, and François on the subject of social networks, but I'd like to include a parenthesis in mid-chapter.

In Brazil, as you know, the elections for comrade Dilma were a true and very tough media war, and I had the pleasure of being able to struggle hard because I work particularly in the area of social sciences and information sciences.

Commander: Precisely, it was she and the people around her that spoke to me about Niemeyer.

Marilia Guimarães: Exactly. One example: they posted a video on Youtube about a pastor saying horrible things about Dilma. He said she was heading towards Communism, that she was going to sell Brazil out to Cuba, and all those things that are being said for years. And it was a waste of time, because, finally, we came to the conclusion that the empire has never won a war; it has won small battles but lose almost all of them. The only country that has won a war has been Cuba. Without a doubt, this is something we must think about.

Commander: If we had lost, it would have been hard.

Marilia Guimarães: So, Dilma's election was very tough. We indeed managed to oppose the large communication media.

Nowadays, Journal O Globo, TV Globo does some horrendous things, because TV is still very strong; it gets to a sector of the population that we have not managed to get to, it's logical. But, they are forced, by the strength of Twitter, by the strength of Facebook, and by the strength of the other social networks, to publish on the second page every day the items that were most news-worthy on Twitter and Facebook.

Commander: And who has inherited that television?

Marilia Guimarães: Pardon me?

Commander: Who inherited that media, that media empire?

Marilia Guimarães: Oh! TV Globo... it has a very high debt with the government. Before their license is renewed, they put some pressure by speaking ill about everything. But, when their license is renewed, they start speaking well and making good propaganda. For example, during the last electoral campaign, all the media were against Dilma. After the licenses were renewed, they started to speak well (Laughter).

The governing is not an easy task for Dilma. There is a very strong coalition among different parties. Dilma used to be my comrade in the organization; I love her very much. She looked after my children two weeks before I hijacked the plane to come to Cuba, because I was being persecuted by the dictatorship. I mean, I have a very close relationship with her, but, you know, she is in a very delicate situation because there is a right-wing coalition, a left-wing coalition, a coalition of every trend, and it's very complicated to reconcile all of them. And, now, she cannot fail to honor certain commitments, such as, for example, renewing Globo's license, which was granted under Getulio's government. That license was granted a long time ago.

Regarding the social networks, we reached a very interesting conclusion two weeks ago. We started doing a survey on the net about the Cuban Five, because the Movement for the Cuban Five is a gigantic movement, and we had not yet realized how far that movement had reached on the networks, what it had done and changed, and how many people had joined this movement.

For your information, at this point in time, on the fifth day of every month, the Movement for the Cuban Five reaches out to an incredibly huge audience on the Twitter map and on the Facebook map. It's insane. You look at the entire map of the world: Asia, Africa, America and you see it full of dots... I can send it by e-mail all over the world, all over the world. I can send it to Australia and northern Canada. The map is huge and we realized right away that what Abel was saying is true, "the Network has not stopped" it is we who are not massing together and communicating information on these situations.

When does the Movement for the Cuban Five take action? On the fifth of every month. If it is Sunday, we do it on Sunday

and on Monday, and so it gets doubled, and that month our scores improve quite a lot. This month we scored an enormous increase and the number of people on it is huge. As we go along mapping it out, we can see that the dots on the Network are growing, which means that more people are saying something about the Cuban Five.

I have already seen such phrases as, for example, “What’s that? Explain this, please.” In other words, there were people who listened, who hadn’t seen anything yet, but were becoming aware that something is going on in the world, that there are five persons imprisoned in the U.S. and they hadn’t heard of it, or maybe this is because someone had recently accessed the Network or because they hadn’t joined any group yet. That is a really interesting phenomenon.

Abel Prieto: And don’t you think that Fernando Morais’ novel has also helped?

Marilia Guimarães: Fernando’s novel, [*Los soldados de la guerra fría* (The Cold War Soldiers)] is having an incredibly huge success. The first night it was launched, 20,000 books were sold in São Paulo; so was the case in Rio. On the book-signing evening, 25,000 copies were sold. That’s a lot of books; a lot. Why? Because it is a very specific subject and it is a political topic, and it isn’t necessarily a subject that you can say that everybody in the world is going to buy a book about; and the fact that a book about such a specific subject had sold 25,000 copies in one day is considered to be a huge sale in the publishing business.

I think that book was needed; it came out at the right time because the work on the Cuban Five is already well-consolidated and the book is a good complement to that information for people who do not have access to the history of Cuba and all that. It was really, really good. I understand that he has offered to make a movie from the book.

Another matter that has to do with the strength of the nets that I’d like to mention here is that at all times, Cuba, Venezuela, and Brazil were the three countries who worked very hard. It is true that in Brazil we count on the presence of a very influential

person, who is Niemeyer. When the name of Niemeyer appears on the net, a minute later there are millions of persons tuned in. The Niemeyer phenomenon is truly interesting, isn't it?

For example, at the time of that manifesto, *Ángel para un final*, which was drafted by actors and actresses of Hollywood against Cuban artists—visual artists and singers—, who offered to help if they were tired, do you remember that? then, Silvio Rodríguez called me and said, “Marilia, you have to do something; something must be done fast.” So I put together a manifesto—Niemeyer was very ill, he was in the hospital, and so I had to do it myself. It was Good Friday. I just used the image of the Cuban flag, along with the word *Créeme* (Believe Me), the title of Vicente Feliú's song. They used the title of Silvio's song. I used the name of Vicente's song, *Créeme*, and said that we were not tired.

Just as Stella was saying a while ago, now we are more than willing to start fighting every day, and we are very strong, very, very strong.

I launched *Créeme* at midnight on a Friday and by Saturday morning it had 120,000 hits. It was a phenomenon, and nobody heard Vargas Llosa or Andy García saying anything. Did you see that? Nobody saw anything, because the response was optimal. Theotonio Dos Santos helped me; he was the only one around; I looked for Theotonio and told him, “Theotonio, please complete this *Créeme*, because Niemeyer is in the hospital and I can't do this all by myself. I sent it to Cuba, Cuba forwarded it to the network of artists and intellectuals, and then the network started to circulate it. In a certain way many times the Net is working.

So then, that's the contribution I wanted to make, and I wanted to ask what you thought, and for you to help us, since it was you who created those networks and we are by your side. We intend to host a meeting with intellectuals in Brazil, chaired by Niemeyer, around May, because there will be a good weather. We should also think about the weather, right? When it is too hot, it becomes more complicated.

Commander: What meeting is that?

Marilia Guimarães: It will be held in Rio, at the Botanical Garden, and he wanted me to ask you back in December if we could do it, but I wasn't able to come in December, and he is very much in a hurry. He wants everything to happen yesterday.

Abel Prieto: Niemeyer is in a great hurry to know your opinion about this event. They have the funding and everything.

Marilia Guimarães: We already have the funding and the venue.

Abel Prieto: Niemeyer wanted her to ask you back in December but she couldn't come then.

Commander: Where do they want to host it?

Abel Prieto: In Rio, chaired by Oscar Niemeyer, in May.

Commander: What is the event going to be like?

Marilia Guimarães: It would be a meeting exactly like this one today, with some guests and coordinated together with the Ministry of Culture of Cuba and with Venezuela, so that we could all agree on how we would use the Net, because the Net needs to be adjusted, it needs unity, and we intend to discuss some other points related to that. Since we already have the backing of the Brazilian government itself, we can host a somewhat bigger meeting.

Commander: Will there be many Brazilian intellectuals there?

Marilia Guimarães: Those of us who are here today and those who aren't.

Commander: From South America, right?

Marilia Guimarães: Those who are already part of the Net, some, a group, like the one Venezuela did in Italy. We will take that opportunity to launch the book *Guerrillero del tiempo* (Guerrilla of the Time).

Commander: The author of the book is sitting over there.

Marilia Guimarães: I was talking with her; I loved that you shared with us all those memories that made us feel very happy. The book is lovely, very lovely. I think we Brazilians deserve to have it.

Commander: Do Brazilians understand written Spanish?

Marilia Guimarães: I am reading it now. I started to read it last night.

Isn't it available in Portuguese?

Commander: Yes, it is. Whenever I speak with Angolans or Brazilians I can understand them.

Marilia Guimarães: Yes, we shall translate it into Portuguese.

Commander: When Dilma was speaking, she said she was speaking in “portuñol” (half-Portuguese, half-Spanish) and we could understand her perfectly well. The translator didn't have to translate anything. It was perfectly understandable.

Marilia Guimarães: Yes, it has to be in Portuguese, because otherwise, how...

Commander: It must be easier for you to read from Spanish to Portuguese than for a Cuban to read from Portuguese into Spanish. I, for one, get confused. Maybe I am not gifted in languages; we have had many relations with Portuguese speakers, with the Angolans, for example. There was never any problem in understanding an Angolan.

Marilia Guimarães: And the Brazilians?

Abel Prieto: There is the Minister from Angola, Commander, Rosa Maria Cruz e Silva.

Marilia Guimarães: There you have someone from Angola, Commander.

Commander: Imagine, there were thousands there. More than 300,000 Cubans were in Angola. There were no problems to talk to them. It looks like there was a good understanding between the areas of Cuba and the areas of other Portuguese-

speaking countries like Mozambique, Cape Verde, and Guinea Bissau. We could understand them all perfectly well. However, with the Brazilians, it's not that easy.

Marilia Guimarães: Can I explain to you why?

Commander: Yes, it's not that I'm asking...

Marilia Guimarães: It's about getting used to it. The thing is that you heard them speaking and they have a certain accent. You were more used to hearing the Angolans. In the Brazilian colony there were very few Cubans, and so we didn't have any time to soak you in our particular accent. That's the secret.

Commander: You organize everything you want to say, remember that we have the idea, we intend to publish the speeches; yours could be excellent but don't include all the stories you've been telling us here (Laughter).

Marilia Guimarães: No, no. Now I shall start with what I didn't say.

We started to look for the origin of the social networks. That was very lovely, wasn't it? We started looking, and we looked and looked, and Marcelo, my son, told me, "You are so silly" I said, "What do you mean I'm silly?" He said, "Yes, I'm going to tell you right now which the first social network was" I said, "Which one?" He said, "Radio Rebelde [a radio station in Cuba]." I said, "What's that, Marcelo?" He said, "Yes, Radio Rebelde was the first victorious social network" (Applause).

Commander: Oh, yes, I had forgotten, that was some fifty years ago. Didn't you know we were broadcasting afterwards even to Peru, in the Quechua and Aymara dialects. We were involved in that.

Abel Prieto: You are referring to Radio Havana-Cuba.

Commander: That was about "five centuries" ago. At least.

Marilia Guimarães: So, since it was you who started the first social network, we are committed to turn that new media into the most victorious one, the strongest one in the planet.

Commander: Of course, I have no doubt that you should do that. But in my case, it all happened out of mere chance. We knew nothing about those things, nor could we have imagined that one day we would be talking about it here. We really thought that empire would be falling much sooner, but it has lasted long enough, too long.

Marilia Guimarães: Thank you, a kiss (Applause).

Commander: Remember about the work; every speech you make is very important.

Abel Prieto: Harry Grünberg and afterwards Stella; a comrade from Germany, from the Solidarity Movement...

Commander: Is he German or does he come from Germany?

Abel Prieto: He is German, from the Movement of Solidarity with Cuba. They were invited to the Book Fair by ICAP (Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples).

Harry Grünberg: Well, we can define what I am, but I shall speak in Spanish.

Our network represents 43 organizations of solidarity with Cuba in Germany.

I am very proud to be able to be here and I express this wish also on behalf of the delegation of Germans who are here.

The last time I saw you—maybe I can reveal this secret—, which was also the first time I saw you was in Caracas, in 1959, after the triumph of the Revolution, when you were going along Avenida Urdaneta in Caracas, and there I was, with my father, an eight-year old squirt, watching Fidel.

Commander: You know who was there? Neruda, and besides, he came to see me at the hotel where we were staying, and when I realized it, there was a man behind the door listening to what we were talking about. I didn't know the CIA existed (Laughter); I found that out on that day. Incredible!

Harry Grünberg: Well, at that time my father was a Communist Party member and clearly he showed me the way to support Cuba. But there was a difference; my father continued

to listen to Radio Moscow, an old network, and I listened to Radio Havana-Cuba (Laughter), so there were a few differences.

Commander: At least ours lasted almost as long as they did (Laughter).

Harry Grünberg: I wished to contribute an element in the discussion.

I think it is absolutely correct to speak of the wars that are happening now as colonial wars. And their intent is not only to grab the wealth and control the market, but to extinguish everything that provides a deterrent to the domination of the world's globalized capitalism, any regime that hinders that process, and that is why it is very complicated.

The problem we are witnessing today is the dichotomy between the perception of that process in the South and in the North. When anti-colonial wars were being waged, and after the Cuban Revolution, an entire stratum of intellectuals in Europe took on that struggle and became the spokespeople for solidarity with these struggles; we have lost that in Europe.

Today there has been a colonization that was also part of the human rights discourse, the statements that affirm that the wars against human rights abuses are legitimate. All that has reversed the progress achieved in support of the Third World liberation movements. That notion no longer exists nowadays. Today we have political forces that call themselves left-wing in Europe and they say: Yes, the war in Libya; that war was fair. It was fair to impose a no-flight zone in Libya, as was expressed by many leftist leaders in France, for example. So, today we must again intensify a dialogue between the progressive forces of Latin America, Africa, and Asia with those in Europe, just as we must intensify the exchanges between intellectuals in those regions.

My idea would be this: we could write an open letter from Latin American intellectuals to the intellectuals in Europe, explaining how the South sees the situation we are confronting today. We must open up spaces for dialogue, to say: No, these are not wars for human rights; these are colonial wars. We must again open up discussion around that central point.



Harry Grünberg

I am also a member of a left party in Germany, but we are more and more on the defensive; we must politically maneuver in a defensive situation that has been imposed on us by the media. For example, some weeks ago there was a TV debate on a Sunday program that is watched by millions of people, and a reactionary from the Christian Democratic Party attacked the former Secretary General of our Party, saying, “As long as you are saying ‘*Cuba sí*’ (Cuba, Yes) and supporting Cuba, you are not a democratic force.” All that pressure being exerted is a situation where the European left-wing is handcuffed and unable to act.

That dialogue between the European left-wing, the progressive forces, the intellectuals, to move on the offensive also in the North countries is important, because the international solidarity among the forces that oppose the empire also needs forces inside the North countries in order to be able to fight back that offensive.

That is the reason for the intellectuals’ open letter. The open letter could be sent from Havana to the European intellectuals,

explaining the danger of war, explaining the problems of the new colonial wars.

Thank you very much (Applause).

Commander: I'd like to ask you a question.

Germany is said to be suspending the use of nuclear energy; they already have a strategy. What are they going to replace that energy with?

Harry Grünberg: Well, replacing traditional energy requires energy diversification. First, they start to manufacture automobiles that consume less gasoline, something that would be a thrust forward for the German automotive industry. Second, the replacement of ordinary cars with electrical cars, rechargeable cars.

Commander: And where are they going to get the energy from?

Harry Grünberg: That's the point: they will get energy by developing solar energy, wind energy.

Commander: Yes, but they have no deserts over there. Solar energy seems to require a great surface area in order for it to be captured.

Harry Grünberg: Yes.

Commander: And I see there are some windmills, but I wonder if the total energy consumption could be satisfied with the energy generated by those windmills.

Now, they have just set the date on which they are going to shut down the reactors they have. Do you know by any chance whether Germany has shale gas under those coal fields?

Harry Grünberg: You mean, if there is gas under the coal fields?

Commander: Yes, shale gas.

Harry Grünberg: No, I don't know.

Commander: France has around 180 trillion cubic meters; In Spanish, one trillion represents a billion.

Harry Grünberg: Well, up to now nothing has been said anything about that.

Commander: France has more or less the equivalent of 170 to 180 trillion cubic meters; and in Poland, which is right next-door, they also have more or less the same figure.

There is no evidence of the existence of such reserves in Germany, even though all these data have been for long in the offices they have in Washington; but nobody spoke about that, none of this media, because I read the cables every day, and this was never mentioned. Recently, a cable appeared talking about shale gas and I took it upon myself to find out what this shale gas was, and it is really something terrible. Shale gas has an extraction method called hydraulic fracking that is highly polluting and cancerous. Right now, China has the largest reserves, equivalent to 1250 trillion cubic meters; followed by the United States with around 800; then Mexico, almost all of it in the same territory that used to belong to Mexico. The method even allows traditional oil extraction in rocks that are difficult to mine. As we know, humanity is taking 200 years to consume what it took nature 500 million years to create. It's incredible! At this rate, by 2030, which is just around the corner, the need for energy will rise by 50 per cent, and the need for foods, by another 50 per cent, and the need for drinking water by 30 per cent. We have to keep in mind the problems of India, whose underground aquifers are gradually running dry.

I spoke because I was looking for the transcripts of what we were discussing last time, when I mentioned that same case of India. There are thousands of wells that are running dry, the waterbeds of India are depleting; this is a country with approximately 3 million square kilometers, and almost as many inhabitants as China.

When talking to a very well informed and important Chinese delegation that was here, they told me that the Indians will reach the figure of 2 billion inhabitants before the Chinese, who currently have 1,340,000, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. In total, that's 1300 billion people that must be supplied directly by them. They have huge areas of desert there and they are going to develop solar energy. They are

the greatest consumers of coal, a bit more than 3,000 million tons, and also the greatest importers of that product—I think they have by now replaced Japan, and now they are the biggest importers—for the electrical plants they have, and now shale gas has appeared, and nobody knows, I don't know, what they are going to do, but it is a fuel whose extraction mechanisms are dangerous. The Yankees are already using it; it is due to the fact that they consume more than 20 million barrels and they are already importing just around 10 million, and this year it is confirmed that, as importers, they shall be just below China since they shall be importing less than 10 million barrels of fuel on a daily basis. Those are very important news.

There is another piece of news about water. Saudi Arabia stops producing wheat because it had a subterranean aquifer, a little like that of Libya, but more abundant, on a surface area equivalent to the area of the Republic of Germany. One day when I was visiting Libya, I said that some day that fossil water was going to cost more than oil. It came to mind once when I was taken to the desert and they showed me alfalfa crops in the desert being irrigated with that water. If memory serves me correctly, it consumed 2.5 cubic meters of water per every square meter.

Among other things said about Libya, we must underline the fact that it is stated that Libya had between 200 and 300 billion dollars abroad; the invaders said this was owned by Gadaffi, and now it turns out that Libya has no money and it needs loans. What did they do with the 300 billion dollars deposited in the U.S., Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and all those places? These are the weird things that are going on and I think that all this information must be published.

The question I asked you comes from that, when I read that Germany was giving up nuclear energy, after the disaster in Japan.

It was stated that any plane flown by a suicide-pilot, who could crash against one of those nuclear plants that are not protected against that, thus creating a catastrophe much worse than the one at Chernobyl. Look how vulnerable many of these nuclear plants are.

Once we tried to build one here. To solve the problem we had with electricity, the Soviets wanted to help us; but when the Chernobyl accident happened, the construction was delayed. The plant was going to use a water cooling system; it was not similar to that of Chernobyl, which had no kind of protection, and in my opinion that was something terrible. When that exploded, it caused a lot of damage, and when the tragedy occurred in Japan it again became fashionable to worry about nuclear matters and the world started to worry again.

Germany came to these conclusions. But I found it very strange because I knew that they had nothing with which they could replace the nuclear energy they were abandoning. But, of course I thought that their decision was a positive one, and I wondered: how are they going to solve this? And I suspect, I am almost absolutely sure, that they are counting on the Polish and French shale gas.

France produces more or less 80 per cent of its electricity from nuclear energy, and is the country that feels safer. When those accidents occurred, plus the one in the U.S.—they hadn't had any of those—they even assigned a 30-year research task to see how they could use solar energy.

I pay attention to all these news, because we are aware of the importance of this problem. That one surprised me and that's why I asked you the question, and I suggest you to find out a little more about it. They have been so quiet about it. But, I am absolutely sure that they are counting on the use of shale gas.

Harry Grünberg: Here as part of our delegation we have a member of a left-wing newspaper in Germany; it is called *Junge Welt*. He will certainly get on the case to find that out.

Commander: Good, I'm glad, thank you very much.

Harry Grünberg: When Mrs. Merkel made that decision she was severely criticized by the big German capital; the great German capital got upset with the chancellor.

Stella Calloni: I just want to say, Abel, first, that all the work done by the Net and how important it has been have

been highly acknowledged, but it is a little delayed; we agree that at this time when it is most needed, we should be much more pro-active.

I was saying that it wasn't enough to be just issuing communiqués and signing them and all that, but that we should be doing something more. Yes, we have to set ourselves the goal of reaching out to the people, we have to get ourselves a different kind of voice, a different form of communication, because under the present circumstances, for example, the Syrian situation now, we haven't done anything. So far I haven't seen any communiqué from anyone. Therefore, this slowness helped that the Libyan model, the same model—just as it was applied in that northern African country—be applied to Syria.

They did the same thing: a supposed popular uprising; and it really was so, it had to be very small, because the mercenaries were in Benghazi. No, there was no Gadaffi bombing against the people, that's been proven by now. The Russians and the Chinese have clearly established this and so was done by the African Union observers. Nevertheless, those lies about the bombing, portrayed as a violation of human rights, was used as a justification to act against that country.

Commander: The case of Syria is even worse, because at least you can analyze Gadaffi's policy, with its successful aspects and its failures, of course. At some point he was all alone, at the time when the USSR collapsed. I wrote something about that, about how it all happened, and Reagan was the first one to send planes there. I visited in Gadaffi's home, because he used to be in his home. After the bombing, I went to visit him there; he showed me the bombed house, told me about the little girl who had died there. Years later, when the end of the USSR came about, he got bit destabilized and thought he could solve the situation by approaching the West. Then, everybody rushed over there: the governments of Spain, France, England, even Bush was the very first one to rush over there, and he said, "Ah, that's good!" So Gadaffi negotiated even the anti-air missiles the Soviets had supplied him with; because the USSR may have disappeared, but the guns and the anti-air missiles didn't. Our weaponry is Soviet-made and most of it came when the USSR

existed, but the weapons are well looked after and well cared for. The most important thing is the adaptation of tactics to the new situation which is highly changeable.

Stella Calloni: And he deposited the money in Europe because he thought European banks were serious, and so he deposited almost all of the Libyan state's money in Europe. It was a trap. He got persuaded.

Commander: Gadaffi made some interpretation mistakes. He was left all by himself, of course, when the USSR crumbled, and the Yankees took advantage of that; because they were all accomplices, all of them had gone over there to sell weapons. The English sold all the internal repression instruments; they sold them to the Libyans; the French, the Italians, and the Spanish supplied them. Indeed, Gadaffi was like a czar in Europe, coming and going as he pleased. You should see the films that were made.

Stella Calloni: France sold weapons. Besides, the people selling him weapons knew about the weapons, the ones that would be useful or not for the defense of the country. That was the great weakness Libya had in its last moments.

But besides that, we should know what the Libyan people were like; we have to explain the resistance that was put up there.

Commander: He nationalized foreign companies, carried out an agrarian reform, he supplied drinking water to the people, and there were medical services, educational services; he was concerned about the people, that's true. He did a lot that was positive; he should be given credit for that.

Stella Calloni: That's why I am telling you that there are a lot of things to discuss. It is necessary for us to know this when the moment comes to take a stand; we need to know the negative and the positive elements.

Besides, over there in Bani Walid, they dropped what they called the poor man's atomic bomb; this is a bomb that in a few minutes killed an entire tribe of 2000 persons. The bomb takes away the oxygen. They tested some weapons, just as you were

saying. The same happened in Panama (1989). Libya was the Guernica of the region, because they tested a lot of weapons.

There is also the problem that we do not do the follow-up on what other wars have left behind, as the war in the former Yugoslavia, for example; what are the dangers that all the weapons that they are using now pose for ecology. We haven't done that either.

So, what I am saying is that I acknowledge the Net, but we did not have any collective work. Yes, each person wrote what he or she could and fought as they could, because the solitude, in this case, was huge. No one was publishing my works in newspapers; doors were shut in my face for trying to speak the truth; that happened to me. I was censored in some places that published my work because my works were about Libya and because the power of the Israelis, of the extreme right wing of Israel, in most of the media is very great. This is another thing that we are not studying because many of those media are in their hands and they don't let you speak.

What I am talking about is that we must do more and do many creative actions, for instance, press conferences, ingenious things. We are doing it with Adolfo Pérez Esquivel many times when we want to denounce something and provoke a certain impact. Many a time we invent different, audacious things to see the impact these have on the media and avoid they are ignored.

So, what I am saying is that that we cannot be so passive in that sense: that is bad passivity, the negative passivity.

If we had denounced the Libyan model on a world scale, even with the help of some Europeans, and I want to emphasize the great work that is being done by that newspaper that the comrade mentioned in Germany, because it is the only one or rather, one of the few, that is challenging the system. You should know what it's like to be in Germany, surrounded by a huge disinformation and be the only one who is fighting; that is very important.

Then, I think that the proposal he makes for the intellectuals has to be taken up immediately, because we are very distant from each other and we have to shorten that distance.

There should be more communication among ourselves; we have to talk more in depth about everything so that we could mutually accompany each other and act together.

That is what I wanted to add, simply to tell you about the Net. Thank you.

Commander: Look, their policy could be seen so clearly that I wrote a Reflection when nobody was talking about invasion. Everybody was surprised; but it was clear that was the intention.

Abel Prieto: You called it “The Inevitable War.”

Stella Calloni: “The Inevitable War,” he said when referring to NATO. In other words, there was a line that you were showing with absolute clarity. We had to nourish ourselves also from that, as a group of intellectuals that we are acting. I think that we were weak in that and we must admit it. We must learn how to be critical of ourselves.

Abel Prieto: I think it is very important to exercise this self-criticism permanently. The Net must preserve the meaning with which it was born; it should be ecumenical, it should unite people, people who are progressive without any doubt, people who are pacifists without any doubt, people who are anti-fascist without any doubt; but with this very broad sense. We have to be that careful, and what we can perhaps do, Stella, and perhaps when we get together tomorrow we can talk about that, is having that articles written by members of the Net—Cuba, for example, Venezuela can also do it, and perhaps in other countries it can be done—translated; maybe Marilia can do it. She does an important work there in Brazil.

Commander: In English; don’t forget that we have to explain the truth in English so that the Yankees, the British, and many others can learn about it.

Abel Prieto: To have them translated into the main languages in which opinions are formed starting with English, and circulating them on the Net; I mean, Net shouldn’t always try to make a lot of people agree, because sometimes this becomes

wearing. It's true, comrades. Sometimes it wears you down and on occasion, calling on this mechanism would mean that the Net would be a permanent source for circulating texts.

Commander: Texts about the truth.

Abel Prieto: It's about circulating ideas; you might not agree with an approach in one way or another, but let all related aspects to circulate. As you say, we have the truth, and we cannot become impatient; you were saying that as well.

Commander: The good thing about it is that it isn't a matter of signing, but of talking, of saying what you are thinking. It doesn't force anybody to compromise with certain things; it presents a point of view.

Abel Prieto: I think we can circulate more texts; we can translate them and circulate them, and resort to calls for action in some cases where we have swift consensus on some specific event.

Commander: The call for action should be deduced from what has already been said by each person.

Abel Prieto: Correct; I agree with you. Tell me, Adolfo.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel: Fidel, I am really happy to see you. I'm happy to see that you are in good health, you look like a kid (Laughter), and with the strength and good spirits you have always had. That strength doesn't only encourage Cubans, but all of Latin America and many other parts of the planet.

Commander: And myself too; whenever I do something, I encourage myself (Laughter).

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel: That's right.

Commander: I have to include myself among those needing encouragement.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel: I think that's very good.

I'd like to make a small contribution on what has been proposed. I was reading that sign there, "Meeting of Intellectuals for Peace and the Preservation of the Environment," and

I thought that there are many monocrops. A tree plantation is a monocrop; it is not a forest, it is a monocrop. A forest is very diverse. Mother Nature never produced monocrops; she has always had a great richness, a great diversity in all species, right up to the human being. But technological and scientific advances have also developed exploitation where financial capital is favored over the lives of the peoples.

I am going to briefly refer to what Stella Calloni and other comrades who preceded me said about the topic that we have been discussing at this meeting. It is true that the problems haven't finished, and humanity is undergoing very profound changes in every direction. I say that domination does not always start by economy, but also by culture. There is a strong cultural domination, and the system, also in this direction, is messed up but it is intelligent; it knows how to manipulate, and generate also the monocrops of thoughts. And just as monocrops use agro-toxic products—in the case of soy, it uses glyphosate—there are also toxic products for our minds, and there are also reactions against these toxic products, which I think are the peoples' resistance and struggles to open new spaces.

Ignacio Ramonet was speaking about the media, and the way information is manipulated to generate these monocrops.

In today's world, information is being manipulated. How shall we generate other spaces to counter that manipulation? I think this is part of the resistance, the social, cultural, political, spiritual resistance of the peoples, because cultural domination, the monocrops of the minds, are leading us to lose the identities, the values, the richness, the biodiversity, the traditions, and the life of peoples. I think that this is what is being produced in these consumer societies.

Precisely—and I've been thinking of this in order to point it out briefly—reactions have arisen to counter this, and today in many of the countries that are wrongly referred to as the First World—I don't believe in this stuff of having a first, a second, or a third world; we are but one single, poorly distributed, world, nothing else—the so-called “Indignants” have

arisen after the welfare state ceased to exist. We have seen it in the U.S.; we have seen it in Europe. Today they are feeling the impact of the economic crisis, but I think that rather than an economic crisis, there is a crisis of values, of identity; they are losing their sense of belonging, and I think that it is in the midst of this identity crisis that the “Indignants” arise.

In Latin America, we live in anger. Nobody has to teach us how to be angered.

Merleau Ponty used to say that a revolutionary—and you know it well—is not made through science, but through the indignation that is felt in the face of injustice, hunger, poverty, and exploitation; because you didn’t become a revolutionary through science, but through a social, cultural, and political thinking, and science gets added to all of that. But I think that indignation arises from injustice, and right now we should be thinking about what we should do. Some diagnoses have already been made; but, what are we going to do to deal with all that?

We are trying to experiment, to construct new paths, to open up new spaces, trying to interact with popular sectors. I think intellectuals must reach out to the grassroots, the popular sectors, and interact with them, because we have a lot to learn from these popular sectors.

Many times, when I travel to interact with the people in the *favelas*, the shanty towns, the slums, the tenements, it is there where I find the wisdom of the people, their struggles and hopes. Wisdom does not belong to those who read more books; wisdom belongs to those who understand the profound meaning of life.

I think that from there we can recreate these new paradigms of peoples’ struggle, and I am pleased that the “Indignants” arise, and I would also be pleased to see that many rulers, who are afraid... because—as Pablo Freire used to say—the opposite of love is not hate; the opposite of love is the fear of loving, it is the fear of freedom. And if we are afraid of freedom is because we have been defeated.

I think that today we have to begin to re-think all of this. I am pleased that we can share our ideas and see what the right paths are. We have no recipes. The only recipes I like

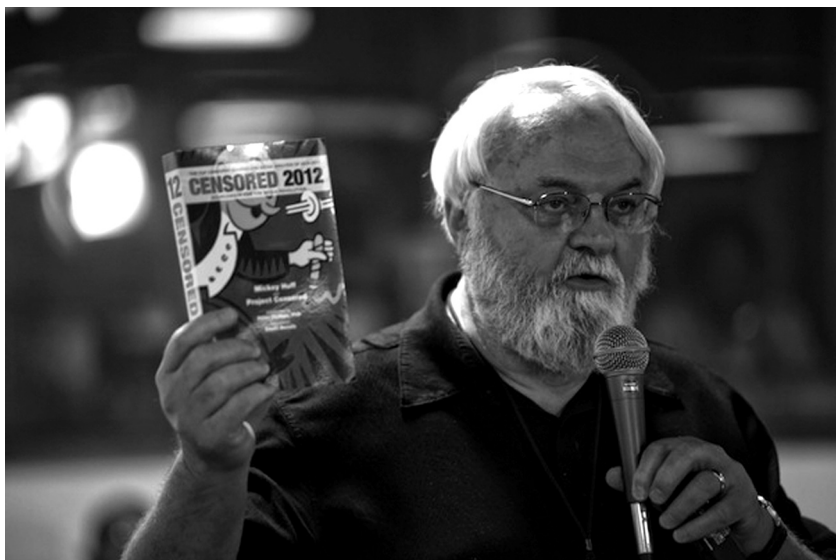
are cooking recipes, and not all of them I like. But if we have these networks, this way of building, of thinking, and of doing, we can get to the point where a society's environment could be a healthy environment, one that isn't polluted and has no monocrops, because one of the great dangers of the media—and those who are journalists know it all too well—are the monocrops of the minds.

That's all (Applause).

Abel Prieto: Commander, Peter Phillips. Please, go ahead.

Peter Phillips: I'm bringing greetings from the United States. Nineteen universities, one hundred and five professors, and two hundred and fifty students have produced this new book, *Censored 2012*, which we have brought for you.

There is a truth emergency in the world. The corporate media is managed news. It is propaganda for the transnational corporate class of the world, the one per cent, the central banks, and the owners of the corporations throughout the capitalist world. The U.S.-NATO military industrial media empire



Peter Phillips

controls our minds, or our monocrop, of our understanding. We resist to the United States by pointing out every year the most important news stories not covered by the corporate media. We use our independent sources of news like Pacifica Radio, Free Speech TV, Link TV, and independent news in communities all over the country to get out the truth from the bottom up. We are part of the Occupy Movement; 650,000 people changed their accounts from big banks to community banks in the last six months. We resist, we tell the truth. We will say that one thousand people, I mean, one million, one million people in Iraq died because the U.S. invaded that country. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* won't tell people that. The elections, the 2004 elections, in the United States were fraudulent. So we tell the truth, and we thank you for inviting us, and we think it's very important that journalists and professors from the South use independent media in the United States to get the message out. I'm recording this conversation today for KPFA Radio in Brooklyn.

Thank you (Applause).

Atilio Borón: Commander, the truth is, as everyone has expressed here, that it is a great pleasure to realize that you are so well and participating in this forum. I, for one, feel happy to witness a historical event, a contest between no less than Oscar Niemeyer and you, to see who goes the longest way! (Laughter).

Commander: You mean, who will live longer?

Atilio Borón: Yes, because, knowing you as I do, if Oscar Niemeyer has reached the age of 104 with a lucid mind, we know that you will not lag behind, that you will also put up a fight there, and we need you.

I just wanted to say two or three things: We do well in trying to integrate ourselves into international networks, and disseminate the ideas exchanged through the Network also in the English language, which is the language of the empire. It would be absurd to resist that, although there have been times when some colleagues have said, "I don't want to write in English; neither am I interested in having my works trans-

lated. But English is today the lingua franca of the empire, just as Latin used to be the lingua franca of the Roman Empire in the past. People were forced to speak that language; otherwise it was impossible for them to go beyond the walls of their small villages.

But we must also try to reach out to other peoples. My concern is that we are only thinking about the United States, Canada, Europe... and we are ignoring what today seems to me...

Commander: No; the problem is that everybody in the world is studying English: the Chinese, the Russians. The other day I said that we were the only ones who studied Russian (Laughter). That belongs to the past, right? But the Russians studied English. Now everybody studies English, because the main colonial powers imposed the English language. However, if they were the ones who discovered that weapon, that is no reason for you to renounce to that weapon. I like Spanish better, of course; it is more lyrical, more poetic. English is more technical. They invent a word when they need it and include it in its vocabulary.

Atilio Borón: Besides, English is the language that allows us to communicate to each other around the world. That is why I am fully in favor.

But I want to say this: We have to be careful when articulating this network, because we could be leaving out the world's epicenter of the struggle for national emancipation, which are northern Africa and the Arab world.

Commander: We can not destroy our language, which is what they have done. How many languages they have destroyed around the world?

Atilio Borón: UNESCO has stated that, even today, one language is being destroyed almost every week.

Commander: And only by a miracle they didn't destroy UNESCO when they imposed there that president (Laughter).

Atilio Borón: They are working on that; they are working rather actively on that (Laughter).

Commander: But... well... they have at least given in to recognize the Palestinian State.

Atilio Borón: Yes, and for that reason they have punished UNESCO.

I wanted to say that this link with the Arab world is important, I believe that part of the problem that we have been facing to articulate a united stand in the face of the tragedy in Libya has been that we have lacked—at least I felt that I lacked—much detailed information about what was going on there. And I also think that many intellectuals and friends from northern Africa were very worried to see that we did not take the initiative. They said to us: Well, you have a higher development level; therefore you should have more political experience. You should have been more active in the search for information about what was going on in our countries.

I think that we have to recover the legacy of what in my view was one of the greatest political inventions of the second half of the twentieth century: the Tricontinental. Commander, today we need again a Tricontinental of thoughts. This does not mean that we will have nothing to do with the Europeans or the comrades that we may have in the United States; I am absolutely in favor of working with them, disseminating our ideas among them, and also understanding what is going on with them.

Sometimes people entertained great expectations when speaking about the “Indignants” movement, thinking that they could immediately recreate in Spain something that required a political experience they did not have, but which they will be acquiring little by little, just as it happened with the young rebellions of the Arab world. So we require a good deal of realism and humbleness to work actively with them and see what they can teach us. Likewise, we should know what valuable experiences we could convey to them. I think that the idea of a Tricontinental of thoughts that could promote our political initiatives would be truly important, since that is what the Network In Defense of Humanity is all about. And this includes our friends in the North (because we have many friends in the

United States; the people that are struggling there for the liberation of the Cuban Five have made very important contributions) and also in Europe. We should not forget about these struggles in the rest of the world which are so important.

I will add a second comment to say that the media power today is the more consolidated industry in the world, even more so than finances banks. It is practically a monopoly; it is an oligopoly with very few component parts that is very, very difficult to penetrate. We should also take into account the mistakes that are made in the area of progressive thinking: an excessive sectarianism prevents our voices from resounding the way they should and reaching out to the general public.

I will conclude with a small and quite illustrative personal reference.

Commander: But do not hurry.

Atilio Borón: I don't. But, Commander, there is a long list of speakers. Besides, we have come here to listen to you, so...

Commander: No! To listen to me? I came here to listen to you all (Laughter), to learn from you.

Atilio Borón: For example, five or six years ago I published a note in one of the most progressive newspapers in Latin America, which was deemed inappropriate—Abel knows very well what I'm talking about; you will tell me, Abel, if it's worth mentioning it or not...

Commander: I was going to advise you not to mention it, but you just did.

Atilio Borón: No, I will not reveal the name of that newspaper. It isn't worth it.

Commander: Leave it there; just leave it there. Do not make enemies just for the sake of it. Just content yourself with having the empire as an enemy.

Atilio Borón: They are not enemies; they are just friends who are sometimes too sectarian.

I was saying that I expressed an opinion that did not fit in with the editorial line of the newspaper and I have been censored ever since. This is not a right-wing newspaper; it is a newspaper that has expressed its support to many struggles and to Cuba. But they didn't like some of the things I said; they did not want these things to be told and, since then, never again.

Commander: But that belongs to the past; those are old habits that fade away with time.

Atilio Borón: I wish they were! I wish they were! But that also goes against us.

Just one last thing. I think that we should be very careful about the Internet issue, because now I believe it has become very evident that if there is anything which the Internet is not, is precisely the freest space for democracy, unlimited access, and all those things that are usually said about it. Stella already said something about it. For example, when you look at the Internet access rate in some countries of the Arab world where there is an ongoing rebellion—and I suppose that Santiago Alba has something better to say about this than me—, according to some statistics that I read, it is stated that in Egypt, for instance, not more than 20 per cent of the people had access to the Internet. The popular mobilization was much more influenced by mobile phones and satellite television than by the Internet.

Commander: How many of them listen to Al-Jazeera?

Atilio Borón: I do not have the figure, Commander, I don't. It would also be convenient to find out how many watch Tele-sur. There is a whole debate about the real influence exerted by these media and its consequences for political action.

Summing up, the Internet provides a possibility. However, I think that we have been pretty naïve to believe that we could use that instrument without taking into account the fact that everything that we do through the Internet is being watched, monitored, and largely controlled by the empire.

At the Tunisia Conference on the Internet, when the Europeans asked the United States to give up to them the control

over one of the four nodes that controls the entire world traffic through the Internet, the United States refused to give up that to the Europeans. The Europeans! They did not refuse to give it up to Latin America or Africa or Cuba. They refused to give it up to the Europeans. Why? Because the Internet was, Commander, strictly a military creation that escaped from their hands. They had no intention to create a methodology that would allow people to communicate among themselves, establish concrete knowledge about very distant realities, and concert common actions.

Therefore, right now there are two initiatives that are being considered by the U.S. Congress: the SOPA and PIPA bills, which would establish an unprecedented control over communications and the media.

Commander: It's been long since people are prevented from working out in the roofs of their own houses because the Americans and also the French take pictures of everything. I remember that, soon after my fall, when I injured my arm, I had to take some exercise. I was supposed to throw a ball and dunk it through a basket. And so I said, "This is for the satellite, bang!" (Laughter). They really take pictures of everything. There is nothing; they have even interfered with the people's privacy. They know everything. This is something unbelievable. Their Constitution speaks about respect and the things that are sacred, but they meddle in everything. All human beings are being watched by these gentlemen who also use that information the way they please. And they claim to be the champions of individual rights and human rights. But, there are many Americans who become aware of that and are against this practice; there are many things which they do not like. That is why it is so convenient to let them know.

Atilio Borón: That's right. Well, I finish here. This was basically what I wanted to say. And I wanted to add that we should be careful about the Internet.

Commander: What are you going to do? Tell me, since you are advising us to be careful. What do you suggest?

Atilio Borón: I suggest being very careful with those messages that are sent; we should not say...

Commander: No, with every message.

Atilio Borón: This is all I had to say, Commander. Thank you very much.

Commander: Well, thanks a lot to you (Applause).

Alejandro Carpio: Hello. My name is Alejandro Carpio. Well, I want to start speaking by referring to something that was said at the end, which I think was raised by the Commander. I wanted to propose something that could be an ethical dilemma for journalists and for those persons who are interested in the dissemination of clear and truthful information and the defense of human rights.

I'll be very brief. The hegemonic press is criticized for publishing information about the crimes of the enemies while overlooking the crimes committed by its allies. For example, there is the well-known case, broadly covered by the U.S. press, of the violence of Hamas, while a greater violence by Israel is overlooked. We all know that.

What I wanted to share with my journalist colleagues here is the idea of not doing the same and not making a fool of ourselves, for the reasons that I'm going to explain.

A while ago Ramonet was speaking about this kind of game of portraying a world in black and white, which is a big mistake and is something that the imperialist press does.

Today we can not play that game, and I'm asking you to consider the possibility not to play that game. I am thinking about a newspaper I very much admire, which I usually read everyday, but sometimes it goes into...

Commander: What is the name of the newspaper?

Alejandro Carpio: Telesur

Commander: You mean, a broadcasting station, right?

Alejandro Carpio: It is the broadcasting station, but I read its web page.

At times it seems as if it were trying to find its own way. And I know the reason. I know that, in the cases of Syria and

Libya, they are criticizing the mechanisms and intentions of the First World to control the natural resources of other countries and manipulate information. I can see that very clearly. However, at times, it seems as if it was putting up a defense, or was being lenient when addressing the human rights violations in those countries. For example, there are other anti-hegemonic broadcasting stations that do not do that in these particular cases. For instance, Al-Jazeera, which you mentioned a while ago; *La Jornada*, of Mexico, or Radio Pacifica, which was mentioned by Professor Peter.

Commander: When was the last time you listened to Al-Jazeera?

Alejandro Carpio: I listen to it once every other day, through the Internet. I can watch it here.

Commander: Still? Would that information be different from what is published in the cables? Or, is it so that cables only publish the horrible things that are done?

Yes, yes; cables from there. You are speaking about the broadcasting station.

Alejandro Carpio: Yes, about the broadcasting station and its web page, yes.

Commander: The one that they have there in Qatar.

Alejandro Carpio: In Qatar, yes, yes.

Commander: The one owned by the Red Emir? Yes, the Red Emir, the Emir of Qatar. He has visited Cuba several times.

Alejandro Carpio: Yes, yes, that is why I also read it.

Commander: But there have been huge, traumatic changes there.

Alejandro Carpio: There have been great changes, yes; traumatic changes.

Commander: They were accomplices of the United States and Saudi Arabia during the invasion of Libya. In fact, there are Qatari soldiers stationed in Syria.

Alejandro Carpio: It's true. Since Hillary Clinton started defending Al-Jazzera, Al Jazzera started to lose face before my eyes. What you are saying is very much true. But, despite that, there are other media. A while ago I mentioned...

Commander: If it speaks the truth, if it broadcasts useful news, it doesn't matter where it may be from. Once in a while those based in Washington broadcast certain things that are true, objective things, but their intent is always there...Remember that they were the champions of the invasion against Libya.

Alejandro Carpio: Yes, that is true.

Commander: Besides, in the case of Libya, no one knows for sure if there was a conflict with the Taliban or the people of Bin Laden. The people of Bin Laden sided up with the mercenaries that invaded Libya.

Alejandro Carpio: Of course, Commander. We are all very clear about that. We are all very clear about that. But, what I beg you to do is to think about what I am saying.

Commander: No, no. That is a very good idea. What you are saying is enriching to all of us and allows us to see the impact of one thing or the other, do you understand? That is why I asked you what it was that you found interesting about what Al-Jazzera broadcast. I just wanted to know, right?

Alejandro Carpio: Well, all that is related to the repression, perhaps, the extremely aggressive repression of certain...

Commander: And, where did that repression come from? What is really going on there?

Alejandro Carpio: Well, yes. But the problem is that it is not only Al-Jazzera.

Commander: Then we believe in what they are saying. I can not tell you what is true and what is not. I can not agree with any form of repression, much less with any form of crime. Because we waged a war that lasted for some time, and there wasn't any single such case. We have the evidence, which are

the prisoners and the wounded that we set free during our war; there are hundreds of them. That helped us to win the war. And even after that, never have we followed the policy of legitimating or allowing the perpetration of any crime or torture.

It has been claimed that an ordinary guy who is truly suffering from a cardiac arrest or any other illness is sick because he is on a hunger strike, and that has virtually become a political instrument; because that is what happens to be convenient, that is what certain people promote. Abel was speaking about the case of the man who was said to have died because he was on a hunger strike and things like that. I laugh when I see all that. I don't even bother to feel upset, because I can not prevent lies from being told. The problem is not that they tell lies; the problem is how we could tell the truth. Because when people get to know—and I guess that all of you know—what has been the philosophy of the Revolution, which has nothing to do with any of the mistakes that we could have made—economic mistakes, political mistakes, you name it—they find it impossible to doubt the integrity and morale of the Revolution all along these fifty years. That is why we have been able to resist. No people in the world would have supported a government made up of corrupted, hypocritical, and insincere people.

Now, since you told us that, and I found what you said very interesting, I asked you what your concerns were.

Alejandro Carpio: Look, for example, in Pacifica Radio, in Democracy Now! which is perhaps the most important independent news radio station in the United States, they do report those cases.

Commander: What station is that?

Alejandro Carpio: Democracy Now! on Pacifica Radio, with Amy Goodman and Juan González.

Abel Prieto: Those are more left wing people...

Alejandro Carpio: Chomsky appears a lot there. They report cases of human rights violations which are occurring right now in Syria. Since this is an anti-imperialist broadcasting

station, it focuses its attention on the criminal intervention of western countries and the United States against that country. I mean, these topics are not directly interrelated; these events occur all at the same time. The problem is when paramedics are persecuted, when there are other events that are taking place simultaneously.

I think I made my point quite clear.

Commander: You were complaining about Telesur, and when I listen to Telesur, I like the way they report these news. Now, if Telesur does not air some of the things that are broadcast by the adversaries, it will stop being an information source. Because one would like it to report only what is true. But it is giving information. What I like most about Telesur is the newscast. It devotes half of its time to sports. Sometimes I get bored when it shows a tennis player, because there are moments when I want to hear it speak about politics, particularly about Venezuela, which is playing such an important role. But, instead, it speaks about sports and all that. The tennis championships and other championships are interesting, aren't they? But it devotes half of its time to speaking about soccer and all that stuff; to sports. It devotes the other half to speaking about politics, with very few commercials, as a matter of fact; and it also speaks about Latin America as a whole. Many of the architectural, historical, and geographical values are being known through Telesur, which also gives you some news. If it didn't give any news about, let's say, Obama, or the statements made by such and such a Senator, then it wouldn't be a source of information. It should broadcast the news as they appear, the different views, so that television viewers could make their own assessments. But I am interested in your opinion, and I am going to find out the reason why you think that one is perfect and this one is not.

Alejandro Carpio: I say this because this is what Telesur is criticized for in some parts of the world, precisely with the purpose of attacking the values that Telesur has.

Commander: But, we could even convey that opinion of yours to a person that listens. You can have any opinion and we



Alejandro Carpio

could convey it to them, saying: Look, here is a comrade who thinks this and that; because the reason why this meeting was convened was precisely to know about all the things that you are saying.

Alejandro Carpio: So, to wrap this up, Commander, I want to leave you with the idea that this comment that I have shared with you is precisely what Telesur and other stations are criticized for in certain regions of the world and, as Che said, we should not give in an inch to the empire...

Commander: What did you study? Journalism?

Alejandro Carpio: No, I studied Literature. Since we should not give in an inch (He gestured), we should be very much aware not to let ourselves be placed in that category.

Abel Prieto: He studied Literature.

Commander: Is Literature a university career?

Abel Prieto: No, he holds a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Zuleica: Commander, Alejandro did not say it, but he was the recipient of the *Accésit* award, the ALBA Literary Fiction Award, in 2011, for a very good novel entitled *El papel de lija* (Sandpaper). So he came to our book fair to present his novel and receive his award.

Daniel Chavarría: Commander, many years ago—as we all here know—you said that there was a species facing the danger of extinction, and you gave a celebrated sound of alarm.

Commander: It will be twenty years this June. But I know it because I read it.

Daniel Chavarría: I knew it from you and I got a little bit alarmed. And as time went by you were also getting alarmed, judging by the frequency with which you have repeatedly addressed this issue. But, in my case, this alarm has become an obsession, particularly after the U.S. refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol. I used to wake up in the morning and my first concern was always to find money to attend to the needs of my family. But two years ago I started to worry about the probable extinction of the human species in this planet, its present civilization and this habitat whose transformations have taken millions of years...

Commander: How many years did you say they have taken?

Daniel Chavarría: The civilization as such, which emerged with science, as we know it, is hardly 10,000 years old, 12,000 years old, or perhaps 15,000 years old. But men already existed 200,000 years ago and...

Commander: It is said that Cro-Magnons appeared around one million years ago, that they discovered the fire, but nothing else is known about them. It seems it is true that we had no predecessors, to our luck (Laughter).

Daniel Chavarría: I know you are very well informed, Commander. During the 42 years that I have lived in Cuba, I have read most of your speeches. I have watched many TV programs where you have talked about social, political, and cultural is-

sues. In fact, I believe I know you quite well, and I also know the way you think about certain issues.

Commander: Are you referring to those issues or to me? (Laughter).

Daniel Chavarría: Let me tell you that I am quite a pessimistic man, and I'm not ashamed to admit it. I am pessimistic even out of fear.

Commander: Don't be ashamed. Don't be ashamed. There is a reason. It's only logical. Do you think you are the only one? Some people have not meditated enough about this.

Daniel Chavarría: Rather than asking you what I already know, I would rather take the occasion of our gathering here in this sort of private meeting to benefit from your prophetic gifts as a soothsayer of History. And since I am rather slow-witted when it comes to judging social and political events, and most of the times I am wrong in my predictions, today I would like to appeal to your foresight, and since I know that you feel as alarmed as I am, I will allow myself to ask you if you think that in order to avoid the Apocalypse that is threatening us we would first need to consolidate socialism in the world. I don't see any other way in which the weapons of mass destruction could be eliminated. Or, is it so that you think that we could coexist with capitalist States that would consent to their own atomic disarmament?

Being a confessed pessimistic, I'm afraid that the world is on the verge of disappearance, and if I were to give an arbitrary figure, I would say I feel this is 80 per cent true. But, don't worry; I am not going to ask you what your ratings are, because I know the answer already.

Commander: What is it that question you are not going to ask me?

Daniel Chavarría: It would be silly of me to ask you that and I don't want to lose time with rhetorical questions. I know that we have to struggle, and I agree. I am also sure that you are confident on the final victory of truth and human justice. I would

like to know your views on this topic, Commander, to see if you end up by absolutely alarming me or relieving me from this obsession (Laughter). What would I need to feel calm?

Commander: If you want to feel calm you should think about the problem and do something about it, although this is no guarantee that the problem will be solved (Applause).

Daniel Chavarría: Thank you, very much, Commander.

Carlo Frabetti: First of all, Commander, I want to thank you for continuing to guide us in this battle of ideas on which you have so much insisted for a long time. I also wanted to convey to you greetings from my friend and mentor, Alfonso Sastre, who has not been able to come to Cuba for some time now for reasons of his health, but he is closely following everything that is happening here. So, whenever I come to Cuba he asks me if I have the chance to convey to you his personal greetings and affection.

I wanted to refer again to the slogan written on that poster, which is the motive or the pretext...

Commander: Let me see it, because I haven't seen it, and two persons have already referred to that (The Commander reads the poster that is hanged behind the podium, "For Peace and the Preservation of the Enviroment"). We must preserve something else, not only the environment.

Carlo Frabetti: Precisely in October, 2011, I was involved in the Scientific Vanguard campaigns organized by the University of Mexico. Two aspects were discussed there: On the one hand, the Mexican Nobel Laureate Mario Molina, who discovered the hole in the ozone layer, warned us particularly about the danger of a true environmental catastrophe. He said that one of its causes was the absence of appropriate measures and the lack of information and education of the general public on these issues and the risks they entail.

After his intervention, I had the opportunity to talk to him and also to the Cuban scientist Manuel Limonta, who is working right now in Mexico, and we reached to the conclusion that this was necessary and urgent.

Commander: What is Manuel Limonta doing right now?

Carlo Frabetti: The truth is that I don't quite know.

(Someone from the audience says that he is currently working as regional representative of a scientific organization for Latin America).

Commander: He used to be the director of the Genetic Engineering Center here. He took a course on Interferon in Europe when an American specialist, a cancer expert, first spoke to us about Interferon. I know him very well; he used to be the director of the Genetic Engineering Center that was created to carry out important scientific tasks in our country.

Carlo Frabetti: And so Limonta, Molina, and I talked about the urgent need of what we could call a pedagogical revolution; a pedagogical revolution aimed mainly at the younger people, giving priority again to scientific thinking and rationalism. Because we are living through very paradoxical times, where science has an enormous prestige, and a great exchange value—as the economists will call it—, but a poor usage value and a limited presence in discourses other than scientific.

That is to say, while everybody recognizes that...

Commander: For that, politicians will have to become scientists, and they are too far from that, I can assure you. As a rule, I read the international cables that are published everyday; and as a rule I can assure you that, except for very honorable exceptions, they do not even know where they are standing. This is something that really worries me. The fate of our species is in their hands.

But, please, continue. I'm interrupting you.

Carlo Frabetti: The basic idea was that, to give priority to science and rationalism. Because, ultimately, science—and that is the origin of its historical antagonism with religion—has opposed a rational vision based on the analysis of facts against a mythical and irrational vision of the world. That is why Marx and Engels called their project scientific socialism as opposed to utopian socialism. Some of us believe that, unfortunately,

Marxist ideas at times have deflected from this model and this project to become what Pérez Esquivel described as cooking recipes. Many a time, even when we reflect on economic and sociological issues, we use certain Marxist concepts as if they were recipes, and we forget about this scientific vocation. This is essentially what I wanted to express: the need to defend the cause of rationalism, particularly among young people.

I mostly devote myself—and this is the reason for my frequent visits to Cuba—to children’s literature. That makes me to interact very often with children and young people, and I worry when I realize—and I’m speaking of course about the capitalist world; I know that the situation in Cuba is different—that most of the incentives that children receive—even when they are taught Physics and Mathematics at school—through publicity or the behavioral patterns, the successful models portrayed through television and the mass culture are absolutely irrational.

Therefore, I think that those of us who work in the areas of communication and culture...

Commander: Would you want to give some examples?

Carlo Frabetti: The most evident example would be the model of happiness offered by publicity. Publicity intends to convince us—and of course, the children and the youth are especially sensitive to these messages—that happiness is about having many things and being more than the rest, when in fact the only way to self-fulfilment is not being above the rest, but being more with the rest.

Commander: Were you explaining our own case?

Carlo Frabetti: No, no, no; this is what happens in capitalist countries.

Commander: And in that area, how do we behave here?

Carlo Frabetti: Here the situation is quite different.

Commander: I’m just asking. It is not that I have an opinion. One can not look over everything, although I try to look over certain things whenever I can.



Carlo Frabetti

Carlo Frabetti: During my first visit to Cuba, which was 10 years ago, it happened to me what usually happens to us when we listen to a persistent noise; we become aware of it only when it stops. After I returned to Spain I realized that I had spent a whole month without being continuously attacked by publicity. In an industrialized country, in the allegedly developed countries, you could receive up to one thousand publicity news per day. Then, all of a sudden, being spared from that continued aggression is a tremendous relief, and you only realize it when you go back there and that avalanche falls onto you again. I realized that when I was asked. In fact, you were the one who asked me, Commander, some years ago.

You asked me what was that which had surprised me the most about Cuba. I said that Cuba was the country where children do not cry, because it is hard to find in Cuba a crying child or an adult scolding a child, and this has to do with publicity, although they seem to be two separate things, because a child who is being permanently submitted to consumer incentives grows up an unsatisfied child, a frustrated child, a child who is continuously asking for things. Parents get tense too, they get nervous, and they scold the child, thus creating an absolutely nefarious vicious circle.

Well, I wanted to insist particularly on that, on the need to remember what Rabelais said, “Children are not glasses that need to be filled, but flames that need to be nurtured,” and I believe that this is what is being done in Cuba, and we must continue moving in that direction and disseminating those ideas around the world.

Thank you, very much (Laughter).

Commander: Keep standing, if you wish.

I was saying that in the former meeting where my book was launched there was an 11 year-old child who asked for the floor. It was one of the things that impressed everybody the most. What did he say? He said, among other things, that he was studying Literature and History because he intended to replace Leal. I told Leal in an autograph of a book I sent to him, “Beware of so and so who says he is going to replace you!” But that caused an impression on the audience because of the way in which he said it. Afterwards, just by coincidence, the image of Camilo was shown on TV on the occasion of an anniversary of his birth—he would be 80 years old now. The TV report was about how he behaved in the school of the neighborhood where he lived and even the awards he had received for his academic proficiency. But what called my attention was that in one of the pictures of those times, Camilo was bearing a strong resemblance to the child who spoke here. Abel told me that many persons had called him to tell him the same. It was impressive to see the purity of that child! He spoke about sports; he spoke about everything; and he did it in a serious and hilarious way. He looked like Camilo when he was presented with

those school awards. He had his same face, his same smile. That's how I saw him. It is nice to see the purity in children. We have to be very careful to preserve those achievements.

I think that we have already laid the foundations. In Cuba, there were 6,000 doctors when the Revolution triumphed. They were graduated doctors and many of them never had worked in a hospital here. After the triumph of the Revolution, medicine students begin to go to hospitals as from the second year of their career. They acquire a truly solid knowledge. At present we have around 80,000 doctors and, of course, it is incredible what well-trained doctors can do.

We were not looking for competition, publicity or propaganda. It wasn't for that reason that they were in Haiti or in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa or Asia. We were creating a tradition, which began with the first doctors who offered their services in Algeria, where the people waged a heroic battle against the French colonialists.

When I think about colonialism, I remember those who attempted to maintain the heinous system in Algeria, with the support of the Yankees and the European colonialists. There is a famous film about that called *The Battle of Algiers*. Bouteflika is now running the country. Boumedienne was then the military chief. They were fighting on the front and we even sent them 110 millimeter cannons, which we had bought from Italy. But as a result of the pressures put by the Yankees, Italy shipped only part of the cargo. It also sold to us some ammunition. And, do you know who used that ammo? It was used by the Algerians, who were fighting the French.

Well, this was just an anecdote. Recently I received some dates, olive oil, and wines as a gift. Muslims do not produce wine. But the Algerians are Muslims who were forced by the French colonialists to produce a strong wine. Afterwards, the French deprived them of the market and did to them what was done to us with the sugar: we were also deprived of our market. Then, those who governed Algeria at that time, who had already attained victory, began to send tankers filled with wine to the former USSR. The Soviets produced good vodka, but their wines were far from excellent. The Algerians

produced strong wines and the French used to mix them with the famous French wines. The Algerians exported dates and also good wines, which they usually present their friends with.

It was there where the first Cuban internationalist doctors went to. That beautiful tradition began there, despite the fact that there were very few doctors in Cuba at the time. Those doctors were the ones who did not leave for the United States. They had no job here and they didn't know much about medicine. That's the truth. Although there was always a group of good doctors that practiced private medicine to the service of the rich. That beautiful tradition has been maintained all along these years, with all the Algerian governments, despite the fact that there was a moment when, out of our own imprudence, we had some disagreements with them. That was when we came across the idea of criticizing the coup d'état that resulted from the contradictions that existed among the Algerian revolutionaries. Why did we have to get into the trouble of criticizing that coup d'état? As a matter of fact, we were and still are very familiar to them. However, we did not have much experience.

We also helped the Polisario Front in its liberation struggle and we helped the Republic of Algeria once again when Morocco invaded it. We sent crews and tanks to the Algerians at the time when Morocco, following the instructions of France, attempted to take away from Algeria, which was an unarmed country, a piece of territory and important reserves of natural resources.

We also helped the Syrians. They asked us for some pilots, which we did not have. But we sent the crews and the artillery men of a tanks troop when their territory was invaded.

Cuba honored its internationalist duties, which later on expanded to other regions of the planet where peoples fought for the independence and integrity of their countries.

This is part of our history; these were some of the actions that the Revolution carried out selflessly. Our solidarity with Algeria, for example, resulted in a high cost to us. Morocco became the main capitalist market for the Cuban sugar after the Yankees stopped buying sugar from us. And what is more:

when everybody in Europe stopped granting landing permits, our old Britannia airplanes were allowed to stop over in Morocco before continuing flying to the USSR. Our solidarity with Algeria meant the ceasing of sugar purchases by Morocco and the refusal of permits to stop over in that country. Despite that, we did not abandon the Algerians to their own fate.

Some years later, with the old British manufacture Britannia airplanes, we offered military assistance to the people of Angola, which was invaded by the South African racists and the Mobutu troops, supported by the bandits of the FNLA, an organization created by the Portuguese colonialists and the Yankees' Central Intelligence Agency.

Mobutu had already committed some serious crimes, such as the assassination of Patricio Lumumba. He allied with South Africa and invaded Angola. His troops were already stationed at the outskirts of Luanda when Agostinho Neto, the leader of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, was about to proclaim the independence for which he had fought during more than twenty years. Those who believed that this would be an easy military operation clashed with the Angolan patriots and the Cuban internationalist forces, part of which had been transported to that country by air. I am talking about the things that we did, not because we were keen to be center stage, but because we were living up to our solidarity duties as technicians or soldiers.

That was also the reason for certain contradictions with the Soviets. The missile crisis had already occurred in Cuba in October, 1962. That was the time when we were at the verge of a nuclear conflict. We know it because we lived through that experience. There is a whole history behind that, which I am not going to repeat here. Khrushchev had behaved excellently with us. When we were deprived of our sugar quota, the USSR bought our sugar. When the Yankees left us without fuel, such an action would have killed our economy. The Cuban revolutionaries were ready to fight to the last man. We were not going to surrender, and the Yankees would have had to pay a high price. There should be no doubt about that. We already had hundreds of thousands of weapons as well as combatants

who knew how to use them; and we also had a solid tradition. At that time Americans did not have much experience in the anti-guerrilla warfare; they learned it afterwards, in Vietnam. When Nixon asked Henry Kissinger, “Why don’t you drop some little bombs on them?,” he was meaning nuclear bombs. It was there where they acquired the experience in anti-guerrilla warfare, at the cost of 55 000 deadly casualties. They used agent orange and other cruel instruments of crime and repression. We offered our cooperation in the extension and modernization of the Ho Chi Minh route. There had already been a coup d’etat in Chile. A Cuban vessel that was carrying sugar to that country challenged the threats of being shelled, the purpose of which being to prevent its return to Cuba. After attending a Non-Aligned conference in Algeria we travelled to Vietnam. We made a stop over in India and it was there when we knew about the coup d’etat and the death of Allende in Chile. So we said, “No matter the cost of the sugar that they managed to save, we are going to donate it to the Vietnamese so that they can buy equipment.” And we were real good at that; we knew which equipment was good and which one was not good to improve the Ho Chi Minh route.

Excuse me for having told you this story. I wanted to say that I am speaking not from ideas or illusions, but experience, because we accumulated some experience, and although it is not free from mistakes, it is strictly honest. There is absolutely no doubt about that. I think that, hadn’t it been for this, this country had not been able to resist because, after all that the USSR did—they bought our sugar, paid better prices than the United States and supplied us with fuel—the damages caused by its collapse was much bigger. We were left with the trucks that consumed a lot of gas. As I have said as a joke, their industry consumed heavy fuel, fuel oil, and their trucks consumed a volume of gas or diesel that did not fit in any storage.

The excessive number of cars is one of the biggest plagues of modern society. In hardly two centuries the human society is squandering what nature took four hundred million years to create. Nobody dares any more to deny the disastrous effect of contaminating gases. Billions of people are packing into cities

that are full of cars; their streets become impassable and their air unbreathable. Humanity goes in the opposite direction to its own survival.

Excuse me, Abel. And excuse me all for having talked for so long (Applause).

Carlos Francisco Bauer: Fidel, as a young man, I feel honored to be here; I am extremely grateful. I must confess that you have been one of my favorite films. And I say favorite film, because I don't need to be a fundamentalist and because, in Córdoba, I always watched you when you appeared on TV. So, back home, when one of your speeches was being broadcast, you could here people shouting, "That's Fidel; turn the TV volume up; do not turn it down." So, to me, it is an honor to be here.

I wanted to revisit a topic that was discussed early on at this meeting. I will refer to it briefly because it is a technical subject with absolutely practical implications. Due to methodological reasons and out of lack of time it is not possible to explain this in further detail. Experience is something very important to me. Thinking is based on experience. And this is what happened to me, for instance, after working in brick cutting stations for more than 10 years. But theory is also very important to me.

The topic I will discuss has to do with a paradigm, which I will just mention and enunciate. I have been eagerly looking for that paradigm and I have depicted it for myself as an option that would allow me to put certain ideas in order. I have started from European and Latin American critical trends, such as romanticism, Marxism, aboriginal and African concepts as well as from liberation trends (theology, economy, sociology, philosophy, among others). All of them have something in common, which is their liberating approach. That's why I have called it "the paradigm of liberation and freedom."

Liberation is a factual and concrete process that has to do with praxis. It is necessary to liberate communities starting from their own temporary coordinates—spatial, spiritual—and also liberate all other disciplines, such as psychology, medicine, literature, theater, liberation cinema, etc. Thus,

liberation is the travellers while freedom is the paths, the dreams that come true; the ideas that are materialized; eutopia (a good place), since it is possible to build a good place; utopia, but not the Eurocentric, unreal, idealistic utopia created by Thomas More, but a concrete an existing utopia.

I teach my students using the Sun as a metaphor. We move because of its heat, because it makes us feel warm, because it is alive, although no one will ever set a foot on it—luckily! That is to say, we are able to walk thanks to its waves.

I think that in our continent and in our history we are still indebted with that liberation. We can speak about the need to consolidate a fifth process of independence, because we should take into account the following: 1) the first indigenous revolts in the Caribbean, whose climax was the Haitian Revolution; 2) the independence processes organized by the creoles and the mixed raced from 1806 to 1910; 3) the victorious Cuban Revolution, which has been a continuum until the present; 4) the frustrated decade of the 1970's; 5) the current liberating process where the emergence of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Peru, and others has marked a new trend. What I mean is that we are in this well-defined fifth liberation process and that we should keep on consolidating it, as heirs that we are of all the previous experience, and also hoping that this wave would keep on growing.

We believe we're still indebted towards that liberation, and therefore we must keep on working both from the experience that you are contributing, with all its nuances, and from a committed theory. We should continue to tie up the loose ends. For example, we have outstanding intellectuals wandering between academies and congresses, between seminars and symposia, who find it very hard to reach out to the people, and sometimes, people find it very hard to have these intellectu-als reach out to them. This is a sort of rejection that the empire has religiously instilled in them with the support of the media in a logical, planned and systematic way.

I also believe that many critical intellectuals do not clearly explain this paradigm very often, nor they commit with it out of different reasons that would be impossible to enumer-

ate. But I could mention one reason, which is a certain refusal —emanating from the repression exercised from the *de facto* processes—to identify this paradigm with Marxism which was demonized by the system. Even today there are some people, from either side, who are afraid of it. Besides, Marxism is not the only philosophy that has addressed and struggled for liberation, as I mentioned before.

I think that we could find some alternatives, but most of all, it is necessary to amalgamate the liberationist group made up by the different liberation trends, because that will take us to the concrete, critical, and constructive subjects that make up the community space where we are born and live.

Therefore, the content of this paradigm is made up by a diversity of philosophies and by philosophies of diversity which at the same time should be the support inherent to the development of science and technology. Otherwise, diversity would be dissociated from cultures and nature.

We all must plan the vital space where we live: the indigenous populations, the Afro-descendants, the mixed race, the critical Europeans, and others. I believe that another concrete action would be to encourage, through the Internet, the creation of a Penta-continental net, since we should all be working as part of a network and integrate ourselves knowing the world's entire dimension and complexity and assimilating different examples of resistance and constructions.

What I mean is that Oceania as well as Europe exist as a group with which we could also work, as was explained by the representatives of the European organizations in solidarity with Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, and many other Latin American nations.

Another way to explain this paradigm of liberation and freedom is by criticizing Eurocentrism in very clear terms. This seems to be a rather simple term. However, if go deeper into it we will realize that there are many influences that are present among ourselves, since we have been educated in those structures that still prevail. Besides, our problems are not only found outside; it is also necessary to identify them inside by making an intensive criticism against ethnocentrism

(Latin-American-Centrism), which prevents us from looking to ourselves as a united group. We could refer to history as a significant example. In all educational systems, history must observe certain moralizing standards, and that is why it is far from playing a liberating function in unity.

The reconstruction of the history of each nation generally starts from the very Creole-centric independentists, thus ignoring all other independence developments and losing sight of the complete and liberating scope of other processes and projections. For example, in Argentina, history starts from San Martín; in Uruguay, from Artigas; in Chile from, O’Higgins; in Colombia or Venezuela, from Bolívar, and so on so forth. And we forget, for example, about Haiti and, most of all, the first rebels of the Caribbean, who were the indigenous populations. While they could not change the course of history, their contribution was decisive. They destroyed three of the fortresses that Columbus had, for which Commander Francisco de Bobadilla, who was sent to the island as an envoy to investigate facts, decides to provide information so that Columbus and his family were tried in court not for committing crimes against humanity, but because Columbus happened to be onerous to the crown.

Moreover, the Caribbean aboriginal cultures mixed with the culture of African slaves and passed onto the latter the principle of “living in freedom or dying” (the antecedent of “homeland or death”) which comes from the Tainos and the Arawaks; and they merged with both the Haitian voodoo and a Christianity of Liberation. This paradigm could be explained with these apparently simple terms, but, just as I’m used to saying to my students, we should not lose sight of the fact that such terms are pluri-fundamental and pluri-profound because they refer to different kinds of knowledge and different experiences.

To conclude I would say the following: Our problem is not only the Eurocentrism, but also our own ethnocentrism. If we do not de-construct them, it would be impossible for us to integrate ourselves as transnational community social groups to be able to achieve the so much longed for concrete dimension of liberation.

There is a phrase by Franz Rosenzweig, which I like very much. I will paraphrase it as follows, “in our context, where the market and the media are giving us so much celebration and so many reasons to celebrate, to me, the only thing worth celebrating is the liberation of a people; nothing else.”

Thank you, very much (Applause).

Abel Prieto: Thank you, Carlos.

Rosa, the Minister from Angola, a good friend of ours and a veteran from our former meeting.

Rosa M. Cruz e Silva: Good afternoon, Commander.

Once again, thank you very much for giving me the possibility of being here with you and realize that you have honored the pledge you made last year. Last year you assured we would be here, and here we are with you today. We have seen that you have recovered very well and we are all willing to follow your example.

I take this opportunity to join my name and the names of all members of my delegation to the distinguished group of



Rosa M. Cruz e Silva

intellectuals gathered here in this room who are concerned about the serious problems affecting the world and humanity.

In my case, I wanted to express to you that the colonial wave not only swept through northern Africa; it also attempted to reach Angola. After the events in Egypt, we had in Luanda a youth movement that received instructions to ask for the ousting of our President and our Party even before the electoral mandate expired. We think that those young people have been financed by the western powers—not only the United States but also Europe. They made an attempt and forced a situation of direct conflict with the police. However, the police received precise instructions not to over react and merely supervise their movements.

So that attempt, which was reiterated several times, did not have any impact. Because, in addition to that, and also making use of the social networks, we began to challenge those ideas.

We believe that our capacity for response through the social networks is not as strong as that of our adversaries, but I wanted to share this information with you because I don't think they will continue with this struggle.

In Angola, after receiving the support we needed to fight back the South Africans and all the enemy forces that attacked our people and our country, as the Commander already explained, we achieved peace and we think that we are rebuilding our country pretty fast. As you can imagine, we had more than 30 years of war. Children, youths, women, every body is living now a better life. There are more schools, which are expanding throughout the country. There are more hospitals which are being built also throughout the country, and for that we have continued to receive Cuba's support.

I have come to the Book Fair for the second time. This time I have also come to negotiate and talk with my comrades, with my colleague, the Minister of Culture and his staff. We are working to have the art schools working with Cuba's support. Therefore, Commander, this is no propaganda campaign. These are facts, as you said; this is our experience. And I feel honored and proud to be here, surrounded by the persons who have accompanied you for more than fifty years in this struggle to liberate Latin America and the world.

I can not forget that, when I was fifteen or sixteen years old, the poems of Latin American poets like Nicolás Guillén and Pablo Neruda were part of my political education, which has allowed me to be here today. Therefore, I reiterate my determination to accompany you, because we have very serious problems in Africa.

The African continent, through the African Union, seems to have remained impassive in the face of the events that occurred in Libya. Obviously, the position adopted by Angola left our country in isolation, only accompanied by South Africa, because the rest of the African countries were afraid of France. And then we went through that shameful situation that was the way in which Libya was invaded.

We must unite. Africa does not have many social networks, but I do know there is one in Senegal which has already given a response through the work *A África Responde a Sarkozy*. Sarkozy has been the mentor of some of the crimes that have been committed. He has made statements not only against Senegal but against Africa, saying that we, Africans, had not gone anywhere, that we simply had no history. It is interesting to see that in the twenty-first century, a figure of a country so big and so distinguished as France, as we know it, is capable of saying such an outrageous thing.

However, that social network exists. What I would like to do—and I think I will and I should—is to speak to the African intellectuals so that they join together with Latin America so that we can continue the struggle or the revolution—although this may not sound politically correct. I think that the liberation of man and the preservation of the environment are consistent with the preservation of the human species. That was a very beautiful lesson that the Commander taught to us the last time we met, which we are reiterating here. I believe that everybody here in this room agrees with you. All of us will get together in this battle.

Thank you, very much (Applause).

Vicente Battista: I promise, Abel, I will honor your request; so I will try to be as brief as possible. First of all, I will reiterate



Vicente Battista

what others have been saying during the whole afternoon. I also feel very happy, Commander, to see that you are in such a wonderful health condition. I receive your Reflections every week. You will make me feel twice as happy if in any of them you could tell us how to keep ourselves in such a good shape.

I'd like to refer to those Reflections, because my purpose is to refer to what was said at the beginning of this meeting, when Ramonet, Stella Calloni and Borón spoke about the Internet, the social networks and their consequences.

In one of your Reflections you said, "However, today we have to blame ourselves for what we know and we are doing nothing to try to fix it." This, in fact, has become very clear.

This afternoon we've realized that we all know perfectly well what social networks and the Internet are all about. We also know what we mean when we talk about the hegemonic press. Nevertheless, despite all that, I think I perceived a certain fear towards the Internet. It was said here that we were being spied, and is true. That, however, should not make us dispense with the Internet which is, over and above everything, the Network of Networks. We should be careful; that is true. But, why can't we fantasize about the possibility that some of those who spy on your Reflections, Commander, would finally become aware of the situation and decide to change sides and join us?

I believe it is time for us to start working. For example, the suggestion made by our colleague from Germany is very important: an open letter from Latin American intellectuals to the European intellectuals. In that letter we could state our positions and offer proposals with the purpose of clarifying certain dark areas. That letter will have to be circulated through the Internet.

We know that journalism is the fourth power, as Ramonet pointed out a while ago. Today, the Internet is the fifth power. It wouldn't be fair to discredit it by saying that there are a lot of regions in the world where there is no access to the Internet. There are also many other regions in the world where there is no access to the written press.

Let us use the Internet without any fear. I insist, it is through the Internet that I receive your Reflections every week, Commander. I receive them and I forward them. I am able to circulate them because the Internet exists.

So, let us not adopt a pessimistic attitude. Let us, once and for all, set in motion the Network of Networks so that our proposals could multiply endlessly.

Finally, and with this I will conclude my comments, let us not be afraid of the big media. I come from Argentina, a country where the written press, the radio and the television are opposed to the present government. I am referring particularly to the traditional newspaper *La Nación* and the Grupo Clarín, which despite being the owner of a newspaper that bears the same name, it is also the owner of most of the newspapers that

circulate in other provinces as well as numerous radio and TV stations. According to real figures, 80 per cent of the media is openly opposed to the government. Despite all that, President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner has just been re-elected by an avalanche: she won by 54 per cent against the 21 scored by the runner-up. It was encouraging to realize that one hundred per cent of the working class voted for President Cristina.

How was it possible to reach that figure? It was possible thanks to the implementation of a policy to grant open support to a people that, when faced with concrete realities, can dispense with destabilizing readings and vote in favor of the government.

This is all I had to say. Thank you, very much (Applause).

Santiago Alba: Good afternoon.

Commander, first of all I wanted to thank you for allowing me to be here one year later and having the privilege, once again, to participate in this intensive and instructive debate.

I am one of those neglected Europeans who for many years have been finding support in Cuba for the reasons that you have just summarized very well, because Cuba is perhaps the only country in the world whose policy is based on ethical principles, selfless internationalism, and a true protection of human rights.

But in this case I don't want to talk as a European intellectual, but as an Arab and as a northern African citizen by adoption. I have been living in the Arab world for twenty years. I first lived in Egypt and now I live in Tunisia. There I have witnessed the so-called 'Arab spring,' the beginning of all these riots that have shaken the entire region, and I would like to joint to the appeal launched by my very much admired friend, Atilio Borón, in the sense that we should not forget about the Arab peoples that are rising up in the name of the same principles that Cuba has always defended: dignity, freedom, and justice.

I want to insist on the fact that, perhaps, very little has been heard in Latin America about those peoples and their friendly and progressive forces and organizations that share our ideas.

I remember, for example, that hardly one and a half months ago, from December 14 to 17, a meeting of Marxist forces and organizations of the Arab world was held in Beirut. It was attended by 22 Marxist organizations, among them, the Communist Party of Lebanon, which was the host of the meeting; the Communist Party of Sudan, the Communist Party of Egypt, the People's Liberation Front of Palestine, The Democratic Path of Morocco, the Popular Will Party of Syria, the Marxist Left Part of Iraq, and other Marxist forces and organizations of the Arab world.

The debates which, unfortunately, as far as I know, were only recorded in the Arab language, are truly interesting. But, in any case, you could read a communiqué which I myself translated for Rebelión.com, which was the final communiqué approved in this meeting. The document insists on the dangers that a foreign intervention, an imperialist and neocolonial intervention represents for the Arab World, the Near East and northern Africa, and expresses its support to all these popular movements that are looking for radical transformations to bring about more freedom and justice to the Arab world.

I regret the fact that none of these forces is represented here today in this meeting, and I feel a little bit embarrassed to realize that it has been me, after all, a northern African citizen only by adoption, the one that is trying to echo that voice, which I think has not been heard enough.

Having said this I just wanted to add a couple of things: first, something I think, Commander, you were interested in, which is the role played by the Internet in the Arab riots.

There also something that I think is very significant, which is the existence of an inversely proportionate relation between the prices of foodstuffs and the prices of the new technologies. In the last ten years, when the prices of foodstuffs in Egypt and Tunisia were one hundred times higher, the price of a mobile telephone was fifteen to twenty times lower. So, today, while it is true that private access to the Internet in Tunisia or Egypt is very limited, the number of mobile phones per inhabitant is huge: in Tunisia, it is 9 out of 10; in Egypt, it is 8 out of 10.

When it comes to television, its coverage comprises the entire nation, both in Tunisia and in Egypt. The poorest areas in Egypt or Tunisia where, for example, there are no stoves and people are forced to cook using palm wood; or where there are no bathrooms; people have, however, a satellite antenna that potentially allows all of them to watch Al-Jazeera.

In that sense, I think that Al-Jazeera and the satellite networks have had much more influence than the Internet. It was curious to see how the Tunisian revolution evolved. People stormed the Kasbah to overthrow the first provisional government, and at the same time, all those who were occupying the Kasbah were following the riots at the Tahrir Square against Hosni Mubarak on TV.

In any case, and in order not to underestimate the role played by the Internet, we must say that while the number of computers per household is very low, only 27 per cent of Tunisians have private access to the Internet. For example, the number of profiles in Facebook is much, much higher; and Facebook has certainly had a decisive importance, I guess, in the swift contagion of these protests which began in one of the provinces of Tunisia and very quickly expanded to the rest of the country.

Finally, and very quickly, I would like to refer to something which, in my view, is very important, that was mentioned by Alejandro, whose second name I do not know, and I am sorry for that because I want to buy his novel; and it is the following: I think that one of the negative consequences of the Arab riots and the immediate imperialist and neocolonial intervention in the region is that they have led to an increase of what Ignacio Ramonet called the 'information insecurity' for those of us who no longer believed in the hegemonic media. Unfortunately, I think that we must accept that as a fact. The two very powerful media that, from both sides of the world, in those areas where the anti-imperialist resistance was stronger—I'm referring to Latin America and the Arab world—used to offer originally a different and credible coverage of what was going on in the world, have suffered an undeniable discredit. I am speaking about Telesur and Al-Jazeera. As the Commander

was reminding us of, Al-Jazeera has become a pawn to the service of the interests of Qatar and also of the United States and the European powers.

Our analysis should start from there, from the fact that their general credibility is very much damaged, and this poses a great difficulty for us, but also a great challenge, which is not to forget something that you, Commander, have always reiterated, which is: truth, truth; reason, reason; morale, morale.

And, as Alejandro said, we can not say that the mere inversion of what is said by the hegemonic media is the truth. Paraphrasing a French philosopher, we could say that the hegemonic media lie all the more when they don't lie always, and they are far more dangerous, because even *The Washington Post* and *El País* tell the truth once in a while.

Jean Paul Sartre said that imperialism uses the truth when it does not have a better lie, and it's true. Therefore, we have to be very careful. It is not enough to invert what the hegemonic media say in order to know the truth. We have to be very rigorous in that and look for the sources, which do exist. The problem is that we have very few means to try to find out what is really going on in these countries.

In any case, I would like to ask, not as a European, but as a northern African and as an Arab by adoption that we listen to those progressive forces that share our ideas.

Thank you, very much (Applause).

Commander: One question. What is the current production of Tunisia? What is its main product? Is it grains or tourism? Do they produce oil there?

Santiago Alba: They produce phosphates; they have open cast mines of phosphate which is, I guess, their second most important product. Tourism and remittances from emigrants used to be the first sources of revenues until now. One million Tunisians live abroad. They are a population of 10 million; so 10 per cent of the Tunisian population lives abroad and send remittances back to Tunisia.

Commander: Compared to the Moroccan population, is the phosphate production more or less similar or is it bigger?

Santiago Alba: Tunisia produces more phosphate than Morocco. It is a major producer; I think it is the third largest producer of phosphate in the world.

Commander: Which is the second largest?

Santiago Alba: I don't know; I can not tell. But I think it is the third largest producer of phosphate and that has been one of the most important sources of revenues for them, together with remittances and tourism, which has diminished by 10 per cent as a result of the overthrow of Ben Alí and all this period of instability.

Commander: Do they produce coal?

Santiago Alba: No.

Commander: Do they produce gas or oil?

Santiago Alba: No.

Commander: Where do they get the oil from, Libya or Algeria?

Santiago Alba: They get it from Libya and from Algeria, from both countries.

Commander: That information about phosphate is interesting. What crops do they have?

Santiago Alba: They have a wide variety of crops; they have many olive trees plantations and a very high production of olive oil which is of an excellent quality. I would say it is the best olive oil in the world. In fact, the Italians and the Spaniards rob it from them and bottle it under Spanish or Italian brands (Laughter). It is an excellent olive oil.

Commander: Do they compete, let's say, for the supremacy in quality?

Santiago Alba: The quality of their oil is probably the best of the world.

Commander: Do they also produce wine?

Santiago Alba: Yes, yes; they also have vineyards.

Commander: Who introduced them to wine production, the French?

Santiago Alba: The French. The Tunisian wine is not bad. It is not of an exceptional quality, but it is not bad.

Commander: I haven't tried it.

Santiago Alba: You haven't tried it.

Commander: Do they also produce dates?

Santiago Alba: They do; they also do. After the entire dates production of Iraq was destroyed as a result of the U.S. invasion, Tunisia became one of the largest producers, particularly of some of the highest quality dates, the so-called "fingers of light." They have a beautiful name and they are grown in the southern part of Tunisia, whose production is quite high.

Commander: Do they produce some grain, like wheat?

Santiago Alba: Yes, but I will venture to give you that information, Commander, because I could not give you accurate data about the grain production in Tunisia.

Commander: And, which are the fundamental improvements that those changes have brought about?

Santiago Alba: I think this is an ongoing process that will take some years, if everything comes out well and manages to consolidate. But they have introduced changes which, in my view, are already important. One change that can not be disregarded is the fact that the persons who are currently in government are the ones that were persecuted by the Europeans and the United States for years to the point of supporting a ferociously repressive dictatorship. I am referring to the Nahda Party, a moderate Islamic party. Right now, after the elections of October 23, there were also elections for a Constituent Assembly—Tunisia is in the midst of a constituent process. It is currently being governed by two left wing forces, we may say. One of them is called 'To the Congress for the Republic,' led by a long-time government opponent...

Commander: What is the name of the government party?

Santiago Alba: The government party is called Nahda, which means renaissance in Arabic.

Commander: Have they already approved the Constitution?

Santiago Alba: No, they are in the process of drafting it.

Commander: What are the fundamental topics that they are discussing?

Santiago Alba: Well, we could say that, on the one hand, there are all kinds of pressures so that the most advanced social aspects are included. But, as you know, one of the problems that can not be avoided right now in the Arab world is the rise of the moderate Islamic forces. Therefore, there is certainly a debate in the Constituent Assembly about the aspects that have to do with identity. For example, Article 1, which is one of the most widely discussed articles, has to do with the definition of the Tunisian identity.



Santiago Alba

Commander: How is the land distributed there? Are there large agricultural estates?

Santiago Alba: Land is badly distributed. Yes, there are large agricultural estates. It is a country that will require an agrarian reform.

Commander: In a country like Tunisia, what is a large agricultural estate like? For example, what would be the area of a large estate of grapes, or whatever?

Santiago Alba: You are getting me into serious trouble, and I must confess my ignorance. I do not know how to measure anything in hectares.

Commander: All right. So they have good wine.

Santiago Alba: Yes, they do have good wine.

Commander: And, who owns the phosphate mines?

Santiago Alba: The phosphate mines are officially owned by the State, but they are managed by French private companies. We could say that mines are nominally State-owned.

Commander: When you say managed, you mean administered?

Santiago Alba: Exactly; administered.

Commander: Do the products that they produce belong to them? What does it mean to have a management contract in that area?

Santiago Alba: Well, I think that, in this case, the management contract would give the administering company more than 50 per cent of profits.

Commander: How many Tunisians—I don't know if you know this—work in phosphate production?

Santiago Alba: I can not give you any exact figure, but I can tell you that there are many. Besides, the mining basin, which is a very extensive area in south-western Tunisia, whose main center is the city of Gafsa, was a sort of testing ground for the

current riots. In 2008 there was a miner's riot, and those mines provide employment for many, many people in a very extensive region.

Commander: Don't you know, even in rough figures, what are the production outputs? Is it 500,000 tones, one million tones?

Santiago Alba: I can not tell you, but if you are interested in those data, I can convey them to you through Abel this very evening?

Commander: We consume phosphate.

Santiago Alba: Are you not consumers of phosphate?

Commander: We are; we are. And that is one of the most important inputs in agriculture.

Santiago Alba: Well, if you wish, I can relay to you these data this very evening through Abel.

Commander: How will you send it to me? through?...

Santiago Alba: Well, I guess that through these very fast technological means that allow us to read your Reflections (Laughter).

Commander: Through the Internet?

Santiago Alba: Through the Internet.

Commander: Good! Interesting.

We should know a little bit more about Tunisia, because we don't. Thank you, very much.

Santiago Alba: Thank you (Applause).

Farruco Sesto: Commander, I bring you greetings from the Bolivarian Venezuela.

Abel Prieto: He is taking care of the reconstruction of Caracas. He is Minister of State for the Reconstruction of Caracas. Right now, at this very moment...

Commander: But that costs a lot of money. Where do you get the funds from? How much does the reconstruction of Caracas cost?

Farruco Sesto: We are doing some plans. We have found one difficulty, Commander: all the planning systems that we know, almost without exception, accept the social structure of the city as it is. That is to say, the morphology of the city is an expression of the social classes' structure. Then, all plans are technical, academic, very little proactive, and the transformation of a city would require many resources. It is not an easy task. Besides, they have another inconvenience, and it is that they accept reality, and all they want is to solve functional problems. For a revolution, that is not enough. We have to re-invent the way that we do city planning.

Commander: And I guess that the governor is not very cooperative with you in that reconstruction task.

Farruco Sesto: The governor does not have anything to do with this.

Commander: How come? He is the governor.

Farruco Sesto: Well, he is the mayor. Remember that no one there is ready to make any effort.

Commander: Aren't you in Caracas? Or, are you in the Caracas where the National Government is headquartered?

Farruco Sesto: This task is for the Greater Caracas.

Commander: I guess that the Greater Caracas includes everything; the region of Miranda and the region of...

Farruco Sesto: Yes, the entire Caracas.

Commander: How many inhabitants does it have?

Farruco Sesto: Close to 5 million already.

Commander: Where does the water come from?

Farruco Sesto: Caracas is full of difficulties. That is a long story. It is a city that grew in a very incorrect way. It followed the growth pattern of the Americans. Its public rules and regulations were drafted under the supervision of a Californian architect; and, well, reconstructing Caracas is very complicated, really very complicated. It is a whole process.

Commander: How many cars are there in Caracas?

Farruco Sesto: That is a complete madness. People will reach their destination first if they go by walking instead of driving.

Commander: What is the price of gasoline?

Farruco Sesto: Gasoline costs much less than mineral water.

Commander: Of course, I was going to ask you that.

Farruco Sesto: It costs much less than mineral water.

Commander: With the money needed to buy a bottle of water you can almost fill half a tank of gasoline.

Farruco Sesto: You can fill a tank. With one dollar, which would be equal to 4.30 Bolivars, you can fill a tank of an average vehicle.

Commander: Phenomenal! But, well, you are now building railways with the cooperation of the Chinese.

Farruco Sesto: We are building railways.

Commander: The People's Republic of China is cooperating with you in that task.

Farruco Sesto: Yes, it is.

Commander: Will the railways reach to Zulia? Where are you taking the first one to?

Farruco Sesto: We will be taking them there and to the northern hub of the plain lands because, as you know, the Venezuelan population is concentrated in the North and in the Andean states. If you look at a satellite image taken at night you will see the concentration of lights all along the coast. In a country with an area of almost one million square kilometers there are states that are huge.

Commander: Nine hundred and sixty thousand square kilometers I think is the total area; almost one million square kilometers, as you said.

Farruco Sesto: That's right; and if you include the territorial waters, it easily reaches the figure of one million.

Commander: You intend to bring water from Maracaibo.

Now, you should not be discouraged. I understand how hard you have to struggle there. It is a tough struggle; but I think that no one else can do what you are doing in Venezuela. Only you and only Chávez can do it.

Now, in fact, let me tell you that I don't only watch Tele-sur; I also watch Venezolana de Televisión. Those are two different TV channels. Chávez was speaking today and I could not listen to him because of you (Laughter); because I had to come here. But I see that you are doing an enormous effort, and I hope you will not be discouraged by any difficulty.

Farruco Sesto: No, no, Commander. Never! Never!

Commander: Much of what will happen in the rest of Latin America depends on what you are doing now. To me it is a miracle that you were able to create CELAC.

Farruco Sesto: That is something very important.

Commander: Without the cooperation of Venezuela, what would have been the fate of those Caribbean countries when the price of the oil barrel went above 100 dollars? That cooperation has saved all those countries. It has been extremely important (Applause).

You are doing things that are really extraordinary. But the empire will also put up a fight there.

Farruco Sesto: But it will be defeated, over and over again. Commander, while I listened to all the interventions and the debate I was remembering that in a meeting with intellectuals and artists of many countries in Caracas, some six to seven years ago, President Chávez was telling us that these were not the times for resistance, that it was not enough to define a stand and that we should abandon the defensive attitudes. He said that this was the time to counterattack, that the intellectuals and artists should counterattack. I understand that, as part of the battle of ideas, he does that all the time, because he is a man whose mind does not rest. He is always inventing things, forcing things. He is a man of an incredible resolve.



Francisco Sesto, *Farruco*

Commander: He already thought that way when he first travelled to Cuba, when he came out of prison. He has really inherited the historical tradition of Venezuela. No one like him can make a summary of those 100 years during which Venezuela was the biggest oil exporter; it was the biggest oil exporter almost during the entire last century. The prices that the Yankees paid for the oil and the poverty level in Venezuela were incredible.

Venezuela is a typical example of what the imperialist policy has done in the hemisphere. It is, of course, a country with huge resources. However, no one has done, nor has been able to do what Chávez is doing not only in the areas of education

and health, but also in every other sector. For example, the pensions that are being paid to the children without parental care is something extraordinary. That is one outstanding thing. You are building new houses. As you explained, none of those families would have ever had the opportunity of having a house; and now you are building 150,000 new houses.

How many you intend to build this year?

Farruco Sesto: We intend to build 200,000 as a minimum. Next year we intend to build 300,000.

Commander: That program is the only way in which those people could have an apartment in Caracas or elsewhere in the country.

Farruco Sesto: That's right.

Commander: Chávez protected the pensions against devaluations by putting the lowest ones on a level with the minimum salaries; and through the assistance to children without parental care, he expanded the protection to all the children and adolescents requiring certain resources to cover their most basic needs. This would be something meaningful for the humble families of any country; it is a dream for the overwhelming majority of humanity. I think that only Chávez, armed with the ideas and dreams of Bolívar, could lead a country like Venezuela that is so rich and at the same time has been so much plundered into becoming a key actor in the shaping of its own destiny. That is what the Bolivarian Revolution means.

Just see what happened with the dollar. After the Second World War, the United States and its allies imposed the Bretton-Woods agreement, which granted the United States—the richest and most powerful country in the world—the right to mint the hard currency required in world trade. The agreement established at least a certain limit to that faculty, which was the obligation of having one Troy ounce of gold per every 35 dollars in paper money. The owner of that money had the right to freely dispose of this amount of gold. In 1971, the United States, under the Richard Nixon administration, cancelled the international agreement and suspended the gold standard

mechanism. The U.S. was so cynical as to portray this as a revolutionary action. In fact, the empire, which was involved in the Viet Nam war, has dilapidated huge amounts of money in budgetary deficits and military expenditures. It also controlled international financing institutions and had the power of the veto at the International Monetary Fund. With just paper money, that country bought quite a number of properties, where they apply the U.S. imperial laws and finances international adventures and wars. Today, the price of one Troy ounce of gold is around 1750 dollars, that is, 50 times higher than the price it had during the Nixon years.

That policy has cost great damage to Venezuela. The amount of money that was taken out of that country during almost 100 years, being for the most part of that period the biggest oil exporter in the world, is inestimable. That figure is impossible to calculate and it is estimated to be much more than one trillion dollars at its current value.

I don't want to use any word that may seem too offensive, although the worst of them all remains short of what they deserve. I visited Venezuela a few days after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution at a time when Rómulo Betancourt was about to take office in 1959. I visited the country to thank the provisional government presided over by Admiral Larrazábal, which had replaced the overthrown government of Pérez Jiménez. He had sent to us 150 Garands rifles on November, 1958, when we were about to finish our war. The Garands semi-automatic rifles were excellent, but the most valuable thing was what Venezuela did, because they dared to send those weapons to us. It was a gesture that we highly appreciated and we felt it was our elemental duty to convey the Venezuelans our gratitude.

Besides, it was the country that expressed most solidarity towards Cuba. Afterwards, however, Rómulo turned Venezuela into the most important U.S. ally against the Cuban Revolution. He was resentful and vain and it can not be said that he ignored the revolutionary ideas, because Rómulo Betancourt used to be a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Costa Rica, which means that he had some political

training, which he used for as long as it allowed him to enhance his prestige and escalate positions.

Abandoning that position to gain the friendship of the empire and doing what he did regarding Cuba was the worst and most repugnant thing that anyone could have done. Caracas voted against Rómulo Betancourt, but the rest of the nation, victim of his lies and deceptions, voted for him by a majority.

At that time, the political apparatus managed to succeed in the provinces of Venezuela, but in the heroic Caracas, which had set and ever-lasting example, the overwhelming majority voted against Rómulo Betancourt. I went there as a visitor to thank everyone there. I already told what happened to me there with Pablo Neruda.

Well, although I spoke at the university and conveyed my gratitude to everyone who had given us their support, I also talked to Rómulo Betancourt because I had no other choice. However, when I went to the El Silencio Square, there was an enthusiastic crowd of approximately 300,000 persons. I had never seen such a big crowd. So, out of courtesy and a little bit of naivety—because that was the democracy that existed in Venezuela and this gentleman had just been elected president—, I had no other choice but to respectfully refer to the President elect, and when I did so colossal boeing burst from those 300,000 persons. I had never seen anything like it in my life. And then I thought: well, I am visiting here; I can not interfere with domestic policy. This is their business.

At El Silencio, where some new buildings had just been constructed, I found that there was already a highway going from La Guaira to Caracas. The mountains looked like plain lands.

I had been there before, in 1948, when the “Bogotazo” occurred. Troubles have always dogged me. On that occasion I had the opportunity to meet Gaitán in Colombia. We were organizing a Congress, and Gaitán was assassinated. My first internationalist revolutionary action was there, together with the students, who were all supportive of Gaitán. Gaitán was a distinguished and intelligent person, although with different habits. Here, nothing but insults was said about him. But he

managed to organize a huge parade: the March of Silence. A huge crowd paraded in silence. He was going to win the presidency; there was no doubt about that.

But I felt shocked when I read the newspaper: forty persons dead; fifty persons dead; farmers who had been killed the day before. There was a conservative government in the palace of government. It was already killing lots of people, and that called my attention. That could not happen in Cuba, despite how horrible that government was here in this country. That could not happen here. We contacted Gaitán; he was supporting us. He was going to participate in the closing session of the congress that we were organizing, which was to be held at the Cundinamarca Stadium, which meant that this Latin American student's congress was going to receive a huge support. There were no free British States in the Caribbean at that time.

I was supposed to meet with Gaitán again at 2:00 o' clock in the afternoon. He wanted to meet with us at that time. We were waiting at an avenue nearby when the news about his assassination started to spread, "Gaitán was killed! Gaitán was killed!" That was something unbelievable; no one had organized that. It was something that burst spontaneously. People started to throw things and break everything, shop windows and all. I remember seeing people by my side running and shouting, "Gaitán was killed!" There was one who was trying to break a typing machine. He was kicking and beating it, so I said, "Wait, give me that," and then I threw it up and it fell down into pieces. I grabbed a piece of iron, which was my first weapon. I walked up to the Seventh Street, which was very close. We passed through several places where there was a complete chaos, and then we got together into a mass of people that marched towards a police station that had been stormed. I could get myself a rifle, so I was already an armed revolutionary, although I was not Marxist-Leninist as yet. I was just an individual with a sense of justice.

I had already been in Cayo Confites, helping in the liberation of a sister nation. I was the president of the Dominican Pro-Democracy Committee and the Puerto Rican Pro-Democracy Committee. The police beat me hard on my back during

a riot that was organized in front of the Yankee embassy at the time of the uprising led by Albizu Campos.

We were independent. When I was travelling to Venezuela, I made a mistake. The plane where I was travelling on from Havana to Caracas was required to stop over at each and every island. It made a stopover in Ciudad Trujillo, in the Dominican Republic, and I got off the plane to have a better look at the landscape. I do not know how the Trujillo authorities did not come across the idea of detaining me and leaving me there. This is an event that is associated to my memories of those years.

The plane arrived and I went to Caracas through a very narrow mountain road. I had never seen greater insanity than that of the Venezuelan drivers, who were running down that minuscule road; I had never seen anything like it. I did not know whether I would be able to make it safe and sound to the capital, but we finally did. When I went back again in 1959, I went down the highway I had previously mentioned, which was so flat that I could not believe it.

At that time, the vain, ambitious and smug Rómulo Betancourt was one of the leaders of the so-called Caribbean Legion, made up by a group of countries that had supported an expedition against Trujillo. We all shared the common cause of being opposed to Trujillo. Afterwards, as I already said, he became a furious enemy. The enemies of the Revolution sent through the Venezuelan embassy in Havana hundreds of Batista's followers and counterrevolutionary people who had been recruited by the CIA to join the ranks of the counterrevolutionary forces that invaded Cuba.

But there was already a revolutionary movement there in Venezuela, the same that originally took Larrazábal to power and had sent weapons to Cuba. Fabricio Ojeda was the symbol of that movement. He visited Cuba several times. I talked to him a lot. He occupies a place of honor in my memories.

In those years there was an uprising among the marines that was brutally repressed. There were several revolutionary outbreaks in those years. José Vicente Rangel sent to me a copy of the book *Antes y Después* (Before and After), which describes several episodes of the moving story of the Venezuelan fighters

who were victims of the arbitrary actions and tortures perpetrated by the bourgeois tyranny imposed by the imperialism; the repression, isolation, the inhuman conditions, and the crimes committed against them. It is necessary that History records those events.

It was out of mere chance that Che did not enlist as a voluntary in the struggle of the Venezuelan people. When he enrolled in our expedition as a doctor he told me, “The only thing I ask is not to be forbidden to go to fight in Argentina after the Revolution succeeds in Cuba.” “I promise you that,” I said to him. I saw that as something distant.

Some time after the triumph I knew he had to go. I could no longer delay his departure, because the guerrilla life, particularly the struggle in the mountains, is very tough. So he expressed his will to go and accomplish that mission. There is a long history behind that, which I am not going to tell here. I knew that if he had to wait to go to Argentina, he would not hesitate to go to Venezuela. He would have been as interested in going to Venezuela as he was in going to his home country.

Now, I see, Farruco, that Caracas is overloaded with skyscrapers. Caracas is in no way similar to the city I saw in the times of Rómulo Gallegos, a man so different from the other Rómulo.

I’m telling you the truth. No one knows who came across the crazy idea of turning Caracas into a New York. It is a New York! With buildings 30, 40 stories high or even higher. It’s insane! Everybody was making that crazy mistake and we were close to make it too, because we also came across the idea of building some of those buildings too. Every time I think about that I feel pangs of remorse, but we were too poor to make that mistake. The best thing Cuba has today is the former architecture. We managed to save the entire Old Havana. It was about to be demolished when the Revolution triumphed. Now, that movement of respect has expanded throughout the whole country, and the best thing that Cuba has is the architecture from those times. Leal has had the responsibility to find the people who know how to lay those little bricks. In fact, the Spaniards were building those aqueducts since the times of

the Romans, without any cement—those people did not know cement—and some of those aqueducts still exist. Old buildings are the best thing our capital has.

Fortunately, as I said, we did not have enough money to build that nonsense. What we did from the very beginning was to eradicate the shantytowns that existed in Havana and we granted the people the ownership of their houses. But, when we did that, we found out that there were many house owners who owned 200 apartments and many families who owned one or two. We could not stop that but we had to live up to the promise made by the Revolution. So we respected the revenues perceived by those humble persons who had one, two, or three houses.

Here in Cuba the bourgeoisie sided up with the United States. In addition to that, unemployment was high and there were a lot of people who were not against the Revolution and tried to find a job in the United States, just like today there are tens of millions of Mexicans and other Latin Americans who are there in the U.S. or risk their lives to cross the border. That has nefarious consequences. There are other problems associated to forceful migration. In Mexico, 12,000 persons are dying every year as a result of their involvement in drug trafficking and gangs, even including young people between the ages of 14 and 15.

In my time, when we left from Mexico on board the *Granma* boat, there were no drug trafficking. The main problem to be tackled by the police was illegal trade, smuggling. But the situation facing Mexico and other countries right now is terrible. In Honduras, almost 100 persons per 100,000 inhabitants are killed every year; in the case of Central Americans, the ratio is 80. Here the ratio was 5, and I believe it had a slight increase, because all the capitalist media have had an influence on that.

Now there are weapons that are being sent there, which is also the ideal market for drugs. Mexicans continue to consume corn. The Mexican civilization was based on corn. Today, after the signing of the Free Trade Agreement, the corn both for human and animal consumption comes from the United States.

Mexico produces many cars, but they import second hand, almost brand new cars from the United States at much lower prices.

Mexico is an example of the consequences of the Free Trade Agreement that Venezuela managed to prevent. Hadn't it been for Venezuela, Bush would have dragged the entire Latin America into signing the Free Trade Agreement. That is the truth.

Chávez had the basic ideas of what he intended to do. He struggled for the adoption of a new Constitution. He swore on the old, moribund Constitution, thus expressing his idea of adopting a new Constitution. He put it to the vote and it was adopted. At some point in time perhaps he hoped to achieve some goals beyond what was possible; however, he never had the support he has right now. I am not saying this based on any figures or what is being said. All you have to do is watch the people's faces to know if they are being honest or not. And when he says, "Never again will the bourgeoisie govern in Venezuela," and states at the Parliament that "if on the day of the elections the majority votes in favor of the opposition candidate, I will hand over the power to him," he says so because he is sure to do so. His statements are an expression of his strong beliefs, not a threat. However, I think that the people of Bolívar will never make that mistake. Venezuela is a nation that is moving towards the achievement of the highest levels of education and culture.

The bourgeois and their masters are the ones who do not resign themselves to that reality. The bourgeoisie as a class will disappear just as slavery and feudalism disappeared, just as the fascist tyranny imposed on the world by the Yankee imperialism will disappear, if our human species manages to survive the deadly dangers that science and technology have placed within the reach of alienated and ignorant politicians.

Of course, to tell the truth, Chávez does not take care of himself. His efforts go beyond what he should do. He works for endless hours; there are a lot of good people who support his efforts. It is a tough battle because the rich bourgeoisie in Venezuela has not renounced the idea of recovering power. It is still the owner of almost all the media. They have all the

money; they don't lack anything. They penetrated the most important education centers to control the main activities of the country and block the access of the humble sectors, for which the Bolivarian revolution had fully opened the doors to secondary and higher education. After almost two centuries of oligarchic plundering, the ideas of Bolívar are inexorably making their way, "I wake up once every one hundred years, when the people awake," answered the Liberator when Neruda asked in his poem "Canto General," "Father—I said to him—, are you? Are you not? Who are you?"

After the treacherous coup, when the subservient bourgeoisie, by means of an enormous bureaucratic apparatus, unleashed the Oil Coup, Chávez supplied fuel to the entire country with the help of the army, with hardly any resources: he had to look for trucks; he had to look for everything.

Chávez has been a very generous man, not only with us; he has helped other Caribbean countries and Nicaragua. He is a man of many qualities; he is the leader of that Revolution.

It is necessary to follow the events in Venezuela all along this year because of the impact they will have on Latin America.

I am very happy that you have been able to come and explain all of that to us (Applause).

And don't be discouraged!

Farruco Sesto: Thank you, very much, Commander, for your advise, your opinions, your reflections and your help. The Venezuelan people truly loves the Cuban people and its Revolution; and they love you in a very special way.

Thank you very much for everything.

I had asked for the floor to ask you this. According to what you said, what did you mean when you said we should counterattack, if you have ever put that in practice?

Commander: Sometimes I have used that phrase. We use counterattack as a tactic, attacking the enemy where they did not expect it. I have talked about that when I describe our experiences. I sent to Chávez the draft of the book written by Katiuska. Now he is asking for the book, saying that what he received was only a draft. And in part he is right. We will very

soon send a copy of the book to him. He has been very busy in these days. I don't know how he manages to find time to read that much.

Many books have been published on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Military Movement. In those days Chávez wrote an emotional poem that he dedicated to his grandmother, which he has recited more than once with very profound feelings. I'm used to listening to it as a presage of the profound Revolution that was to come next.

He used to be a tanker, not a parachutist. There were some attempts to try to capture him, and he was given difficult tasks which he accomplished with great dignity. The truth is that his movement enjoyed a tremendous support because it was the fruit of the glorious military history of Venezuela.

He said that there were times when the situation was so desperate that he was about to become a guerrilla fighter. In my view, he did well in waging his battle within the army ranks, because it was there where the weapons as well as the glorious tradition of the one who fought to create in the Americas the largest and more just of all Republics were. His best decision was to have persevered in that idea that is much more developed today because of the experience lived through and the obstacles that have been surmounted.

The biggest crimes against political freedom and social justice have been committed in this hemisphere. Not a single people have been spared from that. What happened to Mexico? What happened to Nicaragua? What happened to Panama? What happened to Honduras? Mexico was robbed of more than 50 per cent of its territory, the one that had the biggest reserves of gold, fuel, and oil.

None of the long list of Latin American and Caribbean countries has escaped from the coup d'états, aggressions, and plundering perpetrated by the Yankees, which have now imposed the Free Trade Agreement to several nations. There is no room to live under the empire. The struggle for independence has become a do or die question for our peoples.

What else, Farruco?

Farruco Sesto: It's all right. Thank you, very much.

Abel Prieto: Here we have the Minister from Jamaica. Minister, go ahead.

Lisa Hanna: Thank you, very much. Good afternoon.

Greetings from Jamaica and the People's National Party.

One of the most interesting phenomena of the globalization of culture is how new media technologies are capable of transmitting information in real time around the world. As a result, people have the opportunity to see other cultures and events as they are taking place.

One of the most impressive initiatives we have witnessed in Cuba is the clubs of computer science that exist throughout the island, where youth are able to interact with the world through the Internet and the use of other media. More than 7 million youth have participated in these clubs nationwide.

Cuba should utilize these clubs so that the world could recognize the benefits that culture has had in shaping the lives of the Cuban people and mission of the revolution to Cuba's development. These lessons and messages should be moved around the world.

However, the current telecommunications infrastructure in Cuba does not give these clubs the ability to upload video sources and messaging to the internet as the speed is slow and the platform is not robust enough.

How will Cuba reconcile this problem and expand the telecoms infrastructure so that the talent that resides in your country can be harnessed and translated to the world?

This is my question, but let me say that many years ago I met you in Jamaica; you told me to participate in politics. I am now a Member of Parliament for the second time on behalf of the People's National Party and I will once again follow your instructions and study Spanish.

Thank you.

Abel Prieto: Erika Silva, Minister of Culture of Ecuador. Please, Erika.

Erika Silva: Commander, it truly makes me proud, it gives me great pleasure to be here with you, listening to you, seeing you in perfect good health and clear-minded.

I bring greetings from Ecuador, from President Rafael Correa.

I have also brought some books that I would like... please... I don't know if I can come up and give them to you.

Commander: Fine, when you finish, or when you like.

Erika Silva: While I was listening to such interesting things that have been said here today, such important things, I was thinking that in some way we were forgetting about the extremely important moment our continent is experiencing, when we are making new proposals to the world. We are, in some way, teaching a lesson to the countries that have applied that terrible neoliberal model that has been pillaging us; it has pillaged the world and all of us as countries. In Ecuador we lived through the long, sad night of neoliberalism—as President Correa calls it—for two decades. Nevertheless, now we are providing answers and teaching lessons to the world. We were told we were not going to be able to succeed in certain areas, but we are showing that yes, we can.

I would like to share with you an important proposal that our government has presented to the world for the purpose of preserving the environment. When Ecuador proposed to include in its Constitution the 'Living Well' Developmental Model, or *Sumak Kawsay*, this was not a mere discourse. It is not only a utopian proposal. We are submitting to the world and especially to the industrialized countries and powers, the ENE Proposal (the Spanish acronym for Net Avoided Emissions), which is also known in Ecuador as the Yasuní ITT Proposal.

Yasuní is an ecological reserve that consists of pristine nature. It is a tropical rainforest inhabited by peoples who have had no contact with civilization. These ancestral communities live on the forest its resources. Our proposal is not to exploit the oil reserves that exist in that small forest area.

Commander: How big is that reserve?

Erika Silva: The exact size... I knew you were going to ask me that (Laughter); I knew you were going to ask me that

question, so I said to myself: Well, I am going to send him, as the comrade said...

Commander: Is it a municipality or a province?

Erika Silva: It's a province, in the Amazon region.

Commander: How many Amazonian provinces do you have in Ecuador?

Erika Silva: Five Amazonian provinces.

Commander: Which is the largest?

Erika Silva: Pastaza, the province of Pastaza.

Commander: How many square kilometers does it have?

Erika Silva: It has more than a million hectares.

Commander: Ten thousand square kilometers, that's the largest one.

Erika Silva: That's the largest one.

Commander: Is that the entire area of the reserve?

Erika Silva: No; the reserve covers some of the northern provinces, further to the north.

Commander: Some or just in one?

Erika Silva: This reserve covers two provinces.

Commander: Its area is no more than 10,000 kilometers; fine. How big is Ecuador?

Erika Silva: It has 256,670 square kilometers.

Commander: It's two and a half times the size of Cuba, and you are going to pass on something to posterity. Excellent.

And the people living there now, how do they make a living?

Erika Silva: There's oil there. The ancestral populations live on their ancestral economy. We may say they are not farmers, they are hunters and sometimes they work in the oil companies or devote themselves to lumbering.

Commander: How many inhabitants are there in that zone?

Erika Silva: It is an area with a low population density. I can't tell you the exact figure.

Commander: Excellent; it's a beautiful idea.

Erika Silva: But the interesting thing about this, Commander, and comrades all, is the proposal we are putting forth, and that is not to exploit the oil reserves in that area—which would be worth 7 billion dollars for Ecuador—, in exchange for a compensation.

Commander: But, what kind of dollars are you talking about, today's dollars or past time dollars? (Laughter).

Erika Silva: Today's dollars.

Commander: Well, if you divide that figure by 50 that will amount, more or less, to 150 million dollars of the Nixon era. Did you say 7 billion?

Erika Silva: Seven billion dollars.

Commander: They are best kept there.

Erika Silva: Seven billion dollars is what Ecuador won't be earning, but at the same time we would stop emitting millions of cubic metres of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Commander: You are exchanging oil for health, that's good.

Erika Silva: Exactly; we are exchanging oil for oxygen, but in exchange for a compensation that is equivalent to 50 per cent of what we would stop earning.

Commander: And, who should pay that?

Erika Silva: Those who wish to contribute to this initiative in the world.

Commander: From any region in the world?

Erika Silva: Exactly. Well, just now the president has established this year, 2012, as the deadline to raise 100 million dollars.

We have already raised a little bit more than that, but we have another 11 years to raise 3.6 billion dollars.

The problem is that we aren't finding greater receptivity in the big industrialized countries. In fact, they are the ones who should pay; they are the ones that emit the most.

Commander: But, are you taking oil from there now?

Erika Silva: No, no. That oil remains there, untouchable. It is now a national cause that is also related to the *Sumak Kawsay*, or the philosophy of Living Well, which we are promoting as a new living model for Ecuador. In this sense I wanted to share with you all this initiative that is called the ENE Initiative (Net Avoided Emissions). We think that, just as the industrialized countries are compensating those countries that do not fell their forests, they should also be compensating those countries that stop emitting carbon dioxide and gases into the atmosphere.

That is all. Thank you (Applause).

Abel Prieto: Jorgelina, from El Salvador.

Jorgelina Cerritos: Good evening to everyone. First of all, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Jorgelina Cerritos. I am a writer from Central America, particularly from the Republic of El Salvador.

Before asking for the floor I have been carefully thinking about the things I could say as a contribution on my behalf, on behalf of my country and on behalf of that region that I am honored to represent in this Meeting of Intellectuals for Peace. For that reason I have carefully listened to each of you interventions, I have meditated on them during the breaks this afternoon and I have reached to the conclusion that this is not only an opportunity to express a personal idea; this is also a historical space for the civil society of our Central American countries, which have been traditionally so much united by very similar political and social factors throughout our history.

I am standing here to speak to you from the sensitivity that comes from our living experience.

Having said this, I will break with the rules of protocol, Commander, and I will address you as Fidel.

Commander: The fact is that I have no other name (Laughter).

Jorgelina Cerritos: Thank you, very much. And I will dare to do so because I belong to the Salvadoran generation of boys and girls who grew up during the armed conflict in our country. Besides, I was one of those girls and boys that, more than once, found ourselves sitting side by side with our relatives, trying to tune in Radio Havana-Cuba in the dark and with the volume real low, and while we did not quite understand what it said back then, we heard adults saying phrases such as, “Fidel said this; Fidel said that.” So, to me, this is the opportunity of being able to say to you here this evening, in Havana, Cuba, and face to face, simply, Fidel.

Commander: Well, the fact is that I also grew up a little bit there and I also lived a little through that same experience.

Jorgelina Cerritos: I know that Cuba and El Salvador have historically been very close. From the cultural point of view, Cuba has always been a benchmark for us. An this evening, when we are discussing those things that are threatening life and the human species, I wish, most of all, to prompt you all to reflect on that and reiterate the appeal that has just been launched here so that social actors in Latin America and the world do no cease in their efforts. We, the Salvadoran people, can be another example of the destruction caused by bombs in our territory. As part of Central America, we know the meaning of words such as war, repression, fear, underground struggle, exile. We can speak of what is like to flee from our home country only with the clothes we had on, and children at the verge of suffocation for being tightly clasped to the bosom of their terrorized mothers. We know the meaning of the words massacre, missing, amnesty. Some of us have known this from testimonies and anecdotes; thousands have experienced it themselves. However, there is no doubt that, as offsprings from the same historical tree, all Salvadorans have been part of that reality.

So, a forum, a meeting like this, to discuss how to prevent more boys and girls from knowing the pain that these words cause and new bombs from devastating this planet that has been so much hurt and harassed, is an effort that is always indispensable and necessary.

I know that this contribution not only comes from reason or from our condition as intellectuals. In my case, I am here more as an artist than as an intellectual thinker. I am a woman of the theater. I am an actress and a playwright. In fact, I am here because I was awarded the Casa de las Américas Theater Prize in 2010. So my words are to be interpreted as part of the artistic sensitivity that comes out of me to transform the world of the impossible from the drama, from the characters, and from the poetic discourse that I strive to build day after day.

Fidel, thank you, very much, really. And thanks to you all for listening.

Sorry, I had this here in my hand, otherwise I knew I was going to forget because I feel so nervous and moved. I wanted to tell you that I am staying at the house of the family of a friend of mine, a colleague of the embassy of my country here in Cuba, and yesterday night when I was told that I would be here in this meeting, the 11 year-old girl who lives in that house got so excited that she wrote you a very short letter, and I promised I would do my best to give it to you, because I am sure that, when it comes to the issues that we are discussing here, the voice of children has something to say and it must be heard. This is the letter and I am giving it to you.

Once again, thank you, very much (Applause).

Commander: You also know how to attack a brigade. The one you attacked there in Valparaíso, the one that was taken by the people of the man who is currently the vicepresident.

Jorgelina Cerritos: Leonel.

Commander: Leonel, who managed to gather the people, and with a few explosives they did away with an entire brigade.

Jorgelina Cerritos: I know; we have all that history.

Thanks a lot. Stephani sends you this (She gives the commander the letter sent by the girl).

Commander: But the letter is inside here, right?

Jorgelina Cerritos: Yes; it is a letter. She told me, “If you can, give it to him,” and I lived up to my promise (Laughter).

Commander: Is this her handwriting?

Jorgelina Cerritos: This is her handwriting.

Commander: And she is 11 years old, how nice.

Jorgelina Cerritos: She is eleven.

Commander: I’ll keep it; I’ll read it with calm and I will answer it. Thank you very much.

Jorgelina Cerritos: Great. Thank you, very much. Thanks.

Commander: I congratulate you for your words (Applause).

Abel Prieto: Miguel Bonasso, Commander.

Commander: At last! (Laughter).

Miguel Bonasso: Dear Commander, it has really been a long time since I saw you last. It’s been like five years, I guess.

Commander: But that’s your own fault, because you didn’t come (Laughter).

Miguel Bonasso: Noooo! Well, I was taking care of some problems; I have been drafting the Forest Law, the Glaciers Law. But the important thing is to be able to see you and remember some things together, some extraordinary things. I saw you when you were autographing a book for a teacher from Santiago at the Anti-Imperialist Tribune. You wrote, “With a great faith in youth and that the world could continue to exist.”

Commander: Oh, yes?

Miguel Bonasso: Yes.

Commander: How long ago was that?

Miguel Bonasso: That was in 2006, on February of 2006, at a rather heterodox rock concert that we sponsored. Abel, my big friend Abel Prieto, a very dear friend, remembers the noise that we made. He told me, “You are a...”

Abel Prieto: *Juguete Rabioso* [the name of a rock group].

Miguel Bonasso: But the Commander liked *Juguete Rabioso*.

Abel Prieto: Fidel liked the rock music.

Miguel Bonasso: Well then, I am also thankful to the generosity of Zuleica Romay as well, who has published a novel entitled *La venganza de los patriotas* (Vengeance of the Patriots) about the South American Independence struggle, but written in the style of Dumas, a cloak and dagger novel, with Bolívar...

Commander: What is its title?

Zuleica Romay: *La venganza de los patriotas*. It is a kind of political thriller; it's a great novel.

Miguel Bonasso: And at the same time it is a detective novel, because a great patriot, Bernardo Monteagudo, is murdered. He was the man who was supposed to organize the Antifictionic Congress of Panama and was the political right-hand man of Simon Bolívar, just as Marshal Sucre, the Grand Marshal of Ayacucho, was Bolívar's military right-hand man; and, unfortunately, the Liberator had his two hands cut off.

In history, this vengeance was consummated when the Cuban rebels arrived in Havana on January 2, 1959. That is the vengeance of... (He is told that it was on January 8) On January 8? Oh, all right; but by January 2 you had already attained victory and Che had won it in Santa Clara.

Commander: Che and Camilo arrived first because they were been in Santa Clara.

Miguel Bonasso: Che and Camilo arrived first because they were in Santa Clara. I know; you arrived on January 8.

Commander: They came at full speed, non-stop. I had told them, “Ignore all garrisons”; and they arrived without any resistance whatsoever.

Miguel Bonasso: I remember a moment that adds and is a complement to the great heroic deed that the Cuban Revolution was for my generation, which was both a lesson and a doctrine. It was the moment when I saw you in the early hours of morning, feeling extremely concerned about the earthquake in Pakistan.

Commander: Had I had the accident by then?

Miguel Bonasso: Yes, you had; yes, yes, Commander.

Commander: There I was, learning how to write again with this hand.

Miguel Bonasso: Yes, yes, you had already had the accident. I remember that in the early hours of morning you were closely following what a solidarity brigade was doing—one of so many sent by Cuba everywhere in this planet—; you were closely following by phone what was happening in Pakistan and how the Cubans were helping the Pakistanis.

I remember something that moved me deeply, and it was when you told me, “But, do you realize that? The winter is approaching and it will be cold; there are thousands and thousands of people up in the mountains who have lost their homes, who have lost everything they had.” In fact, when the winter came, the Cuban brigade of doctors and paramedics was right there. Other organizations that I won’t mention had left; those were, let’s say, international medical brigades. But the Cuban brigade remained there. And I said to myself: he is the only statesman I have ever met who has the imagination, the capacity to think with sensitivity, in other words, to feel deeply... because there I saw him; there were no rhetoric or speeches or publicity... I saw you were really moved, and I am moved right now when I remember that. I feel deeply moved when I remember that sensitivity of yours towards what was happening to men, women, children, and the elderly of Pakistan.

Commander: I don't know whether you know that since then we have almost 500 Pakistanis studying here; they are just about to graduate as doctors. They are fantastic students! They came when we asked them... Who remembers the exact figure? They are at least 500; they are in Santa Clara, working in the hospitals and they are really very good doctors. That was what resulted from that event. Did you know that?

Miguel Bonasso: That they were there?

Commander: Yes.

Miguel Bonasso: No, no, no, I wasn't aware of that information, Commander.

I remember about the beginning of all that; you even told me that you had sent a message to President Musharraf of Pakistan, asking for the corresponding authorization for the Cuban brigade, which was one of so many, so many, as Operation Miracle. That was one of the many brigades that have assisted hundreds of thousands of people.

Commander: They had to fly to Spain and in Spain they got on another plane and continued on to Pakistan.

Miguel Bonasso: That's right.

Well, that spoke very highly about your humanity, something I have hardly seen in political power; I am being honest, after spending eight years in the Argentinean parliament, where followed your teachings regarding the subject of the environment, Commander and, fortunately, we could pass two laws that I think are fundamental, one of them being the Forest Law, that has managed to stop deforestation in Argentina by 60 per cent.

Commander: What grows there? Pine trees?

Miguel Bonasso: In the north-eastern region, in the jungles of Misiones, some old species, such as *quebrachos* and carobs, among others, have been felled and torn down with bulldozers just to plant pine trees. It is as Adolfo said when he was talking about a forest that has no respect for biodiversity; in other words, a forest that is equivalent to a monocrop. In this case

we may say that, in the northeast, there is a soybean monocrop. And there is also a very bad thing, that you have pointed out many times, which is the use of corn, a food for human consumption, to produce biomass to manufacture biofuel; that is to say, a product to feed the car tanks, not the stomachs of the hungry.

With all due respect for the immense courtesy you have had in allowing us to speak, and I know that you are honestly and very attentively listening to us, as I have seen you have done...

Commander: Will you be writing an article about this?

Miguel Bonasso: I am going to write it. I commit myself with great pleasure, Commander, to write an article providing all relevant figures and elements.

I would say one more thing, since this meeting is called “For Peace and the Preservation of the Environment.”

I think that the anti-imperialist struggle today includes, to a large extent, the preservation of our natural resources and the preservation of the environment.”

Commander: How many square kilometers do you have? Two and a half million?

Miguel Bonasso: Two million and eight hundred thousand, Commander.

Commander: How much arable land do you have?

Miguel Bonasso: In the case of the forests, I can give you the figures by which they have decreased. At the beginning of the twentieth century we had 150 million hectares that were reduced to 30 million hectares of native forests. That is to say, Argentina has been shaved off; only 30 million hectares remain, and these are the ones we must preserve.

Commander: Of those areas that you protect, how much belong to the region that produces the Mendoza wine?

Miguel Bonasso: Oh well, we have a large part of the province of Mendoza that will be in danger if the provincial law that

bans opencast mega mining with the use of cyanide is derogated. That would jeopardize those excellent wines that are a major export commodity.

Commander: Chávez gave me as a gift a wine produced there; a wine from Mendoza, which is very good.

Miguel Bonasso: A Cabernet wine (Someone tells him a different name). No? A Malbec? Let's see.

Commander: Chávez sent me a Henry. I think one of your ministers has something to do with that production in the Mendoza province. I told Chávez as a joke, "Look, Chávez, don't go into wine production in Venezuela; it is better to invest in Mendoza."

Miguel Bonasso: Very good. Commander, that is a very good piece of advice because you know that, unfortunately, 70 per cent of the wine and vine production in Mendoza is in the hands of foreign companies.

The denationalization that is taking place all over South America has to do, I think, with a return to the era prior to independence, characterized by the priming of the economy, the mining rush, the opencast mega mining with the use of cyanide and large-scale soybean farming. In other words, productive diversity has been practically reduced to two crops. Right now Argentina basically produces soybean and corn.

Commander: You have around 250 million hectares of arable land, planted with corn, wheat, and soybean.

Miguel Bonasso: Basically soybean, yes.

Commander: And you are the main producers and exporters of soybean oil and soybean flour.

Miguel Bonasso: That's right. Yes, yes, right. This production is in the hands of six major producers.

Commander: Wheat, corn, beans, beef, milk.

Miguel Bonasso: Beef production has decreased a lot.

Commander: Don't you eat the beef that you produce?

Miguel Bonasso: Well, yes, we do eat some beef stakes, but the way they raise cattle these days, Commander, I must tell you that the quality of Argentinean beef has decreased. It used to be better when the cows could graze naturally, although, unfortunately, they were grazing in the huge ranches of the oligarchy.

Commander: You are also exporting to Venezuela.

Miguel Bonasso: Yes, there are some...

Commander: Beef consumption has greatly increased in that country and you know that livestock is growing in Venezuela.

Miguel Bonasso: That's great! I'm glad!

Commander: It is close to 17 million livestock units and around 15 million hectares. That's working well. As far as I know, the government is dedicated basically to genetic improvements, looking for highly productive beef and dairy cattle breeds through the use of artificial insemination. This is a subject I know well. Venezuela is a large country; the production of grains, soybean, sugar, legumes, coffee, cocoa, vegetables, and other foodstuffs requires a large labor force. Agriculture has still plenty of room for cooperation with private Venezuelan farmers. These are subjects to think about and discuss in depth.

Miguel Bonasso: Commander, I believe that we, the intellectuals, should discuss about the contradiction that exists between development and the preservation of the environment, the needs for our peoples to have jobs, especially in the poor regions, but without devastating some essential resources which are renewable but scarce, such as water. Water is a critical problem in many other countries as much as in the arid provinces of Argentina. That is why we passed the Glaciers Law because it was necessary to protect the birth of mountain rivers that come from peri-glacier areas and which finally, as the poet would say, are "the rivers that flow into the sea." Those are the rivers of the Andes that flowing through different provinces before going into the Atlantic Ocean.

The defense of glaciers has become a tough battle that we are still waging, because there is a Canadian company called Barrick Gold, that is linked to the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States and former president George Herbert Walter Bush, which filed a remedy of *amparo* before the court of the province of San Juan against the Glaciers Law, claiming “acquired rights,” and now the case is being considered by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Argentina.

Commander: You have a river with abundant trouts nearby Bariloche. An American I met years ago bought a large section of that river. I knew about it with absolute certainty at an international meeting attended by the Brazilian Cardoso and the illustrious Carlos Menem. And this time, as I was leaving Bariloche to travel to Colombia, where there was another meeting, I had to stop over at an air base, where the pilots who fought against the English were stationed. They had deep respect for their air base comrades whose pilots did combat in the Falklands. They were very polite with our delegation; they showed and explained everything to us.

Miguel Bonasso: By the way, Commander, what you were mentioning—if I may curiously, as I always say, that your words are really very pertinent, and prophetic—alludes to what we are experiencing nowadays, a new colonial aggression from Great Britain.

The United Kingdom is militarizing the area of the Falklands.

Commander: But you have to thank them.

The Conservative Prime Minister is doing a great favor to the Americas with this move; because the English in the Falklands have no other choice but to negotiate and leave, because their plundering of Argentina and our America was so outrageous the remains of that colonial empire can no longer sustain that domain. They sent the little boat, because they no longer own any aircraft carriers; one destroyer is the only thing they can afford to send, and its pilot is a prince (Laughter).

Miguel Bonasso: Commander, but Cameron is so funny that he has said that we, the Argentineans are the colonialists.

Commander: Yes.

Miguel Bonasso: And I say that, except for the tango, we are not very colonialist.

Commander: The Yankees are certainly not very happy with the things their allies do.

Miguel Bonasso: No.

Now, in my modest opinion I think that we must try to apply a sanction. The solution is obviously not the war that was stupidly waged by the military.

Commander: No, it isn't about a war, but we must put pressure on them.

Miguel Bonasso: Exactly.

And there is a way to put pressure on them. Law 26 569 establishes that the British companies operating in the Falklands cannot operate in continental Argentina. I think it would be a good idea to use that law, which was unanimously voted by both houses of Congress, to sanction the British companies as well as the Barclays Bank which, curiously enough, is on both sides of the fence. It is the negotiator for the creditor and the negotiator for Argentina, which is the debtor.

Commander: But Pinochet isn't there anymore either; he gave them help and they have to use Chile as a base to send their planes there. They were desperate when Uruguay didn't let in the ship that they had sent there; they are there, but they have nothing to do there; leaving is the only choice they have left.

Miguel Bonasso: Commander, I thank you, as always, and I close with this, to give the other comrades an opportunity to speak; I close with your solidarity, your support to the Falklands cause; this is a cause for which we repeat again and again the slogan of the Cuban Revolution: Homeland or Death, We Shall Overcome! (Applause).

Commander: Right.

(Abel Prieto gave the Commander a note).

Abel Prieto: There are 906 Pakistani students in Cuba.

Commander: There are 906 Pakistani students in Cuba. Who gave you the figure?

Abel Prieto: Randy. There are 906 students.

Commander: What year are they in now, fourth or fifth?

Randy Alonso: Most of them are in their fourth year.

Commander: This year they are completing their fourth year, they still have two more, but they are returning home to practice medicine. Nine hundred and six students and they are all very good students.

Francisco Romero: Good evening to all of you.

In my double capacity as writer and as Minister of Education of the province of Chaco (Argentina), it is the greatest of honors for me to be here, listening to you speaking so lucidly and clearly as always, and in good health.

I would like to comment that we have the honor of officially inviting and celebrating Cuba at the next Book Fair in my province. There is a delegation of six writers and intellectuals, headed by professor Luis Suárez who is going to be there from February 17 to 26, not only accompanying the cultural event of a fair that is not a commercial, whose slogan is “Books, Ideas, and Editorial Policy for the Sovereignty of Latin American Culture”; within this framework we are going to sign an agreement with the “Yo sí puedo,” (‘Yes, I Can’) Literacy Program because it is our intention, on the occasion of the second bicentennial, by July 19, 2016, to officially and truly declare Chaco a territory free from illiteracy. In four years we have been able to reduce illiteracy from 8 per cent to 4 per cent; we have exactly 45,000 illiterate people left (32,000 of them have more than 15 years of age) and we have the will and the political determination to defeat illiteracy with the support of the ‘Yes, I Can’ Literacy Program.

Commander: Where is that province?

Francisco Romero: In the north-eastern region of Argentina; it makes up what we call the American Gran Chaco.

Commander: Does it border on Bolivia?

Francisco Romero: No, it doesn't; we are below Formosa and bordering with Salta to the north and with Corrientes to the east; we are part of the American Gran Chaco that includes Paraguay, Bolivia, part of Brazil, and northeast Argentina. At the beginning, that American Gran Chaco covered one million square kilometers and today it covers 95,000 square kilometers.

Commander: The whole of it, with the rest?

Francisco Romero: It was part of what used to be called the great geopolitical unit of the indigenous world. After the various campaigns, both military and colonizing campaigns, all that was lost. Chaco is also one of the last Argentinean provinces; it was a national territory, and because of that condition it gradually lost land to the benefit of other Argentinean provinces.

At present, we have three proposals to share with this group of intellectuals, and we commit ourselves to having the entire plan presented here circulate on all the Chaco social networks, but also in the north-east, by means of the three letters we particularly want to offer as a vehicle to circulate ideas: the February-27 Emancipation Letter marking the bicentenary of the creation of our flag, where we want to remember that it is not only a national event, because Manuel Belgrano swore to uphold the freedom and independence of all the Americas. Therefore, to speak about the emancipation causes in the world is to speak about the emancipation causes of Argentina.

Second, on April 2, (the thirtieth anniversary of the Falklands war) because the Falklands cause not only addresses our integral concept of political, economic, and cultural sovereignty, but it also implies speaking about the preservation of the environment, because there is more oil in the underwater shelf of the Falklands than in the North Sea shelf. Therefore, speaking today about preserving the environment, just as our President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner so brilliantly maintained, means sustaining the Falklands cause not through a war but through Latin American fraternity.

We want to thank you especially for your commitment in the past and in the present, and also thank all the Cuban

people. I am saying this particularly as part of the Falklands Generation.

Commander: Where did San Martín cross over into Chile?

Francisco Romero: San Martín chose the route that nobody recommended. At first he was recommended the ocean route, but San Martín chose the Andes mountain range.

Regarding what you mentioned, on July 22 and 23, we celebrate the 190th anniversary of the Guayaquil interview, which was interpreted by the hegemonic media as a discord. For us it is crucial today to re-evaluate the San Martín-Bolívar line, and think of San Martín-Bolívar-José Martí and the Caribbean patriots, about that Anfictionic Congress of Panama, which represented the Pan-American vision of our emancipation causes. Therefore, as Rodolfo Walsh was saying, paraphrasing the Bertolt Brecht thesis, the six conditions to tell the truth, are these: to know how to choose not just with whom you stand, but also the addressees, the means to circulate the truth, and the strong faith and will to tell it.

Commander: And where was an oil reserve found just recently in that area? In what province was that?

Francisco Romero: Here is oil in Formosa, very close to the Chaco, and it is possible that in southeast Chaco,—we are currently exploring; Formosa is just above the Chaco—there might be oil.

Commander: Oh! Because I read a cable about the existence of some oil reserves there.

Francisco Romero: Well, in the south as well, of course.

Commander: What about shale gas. Has shale gas been mentioned there?

Francisco Romero: Up to now we only have explorations that indicate that there is some in Patagonia.

Commander: Shale gas?

Francisco Romero: Exactly.

Commander: I can assure you, and I would swear to it, that Argentina is the fourth largest reserve of shale gas in the world; that doesn't mean you should go crazy about it, but that you should know what you have and who has it. It is the fourth largest reserve of that gas in the world.

Francisco Romero: Yes, in terms of reserves.

Commander: Well, also in terms of discoveries. The Yankees already knew what it was, but obviously because you were involved in the Falklands issue and all that, nobody has taken care of that matter or is not informed; I can imagine that the authorities know about it very well.

Francisco Romero: I would also like to thank you, Commander, for the solidarity you have given us in training around a hundred students from the Chaco who are studying medicine in Cuba; I am going to visit them on Monday.

I would like to give you some material that is the history of the Chaco and explains that the word “Chaco” comes from two languages: Aymara and Quechua. It also explains that the term has currently been redefined as ‘unity of the diverse for the search of collective food.’

Thank you very much (Applause).

Commander: Some of those doctors have been to Haiti.

Francisco Romero: Yes, we are also in Haiti.

Commander: They are very good doctors.

Francisco Romero: We are cooperating in Haiti. Do you mind if I come up there, Commander?

Commander: Yes, come on up (Francisco Romero gives the Commander a book on the history of the Chaco. They make some comments about it).

Katja Klüssendorf: First of all, I would like to thank you for the invitation, on behalf of my comrades on the *Junge Welt* newspaper, and the other members of the German delegation.

The daily *Junge Welt* is the smallest newspaper of the Federal Republic of Germany, but it is a newspaper with a Marx-

ist approach and shows great solidarity towards Cuba. Its roots are in the GDR and it is a newspaper that is organized as an independent cooperative.

Cuba and Latin America, in general, play an outstanding role in the newspaper's issues. For fourteen years now we have been sponsoring the Annual Rose Luxemburg Conference that is held around the date of her assassination, on January 14. More than 2000 persons take part in the Conference and it is the largest left-wing event in Germany. We always invite and welcome a guest from Cuba to the conference, and we always convey our appreciation to the Cuban Five.

In 2010 we had the visit of Enrique Ubieta from Cuba and for a long time now we have awaiting your visit as a special guest, but so far we have not succeeded (Laughter). Anyway, you could come next January.

Commander: Well, I will only have to stay a little longer than I have been here. If Abel goes, we shall be discussing things on our way (Laughter).

Thank you, very much.

Katja Klüssendorf: Yes; as a small newspaper, we are very interested in the news coming from the two large news agencies, but sometimes we realize that the information has been manipulated because the news agencies classify and select information, they re-write the news, and that is why they never become a major topic. The news are taken out of context and that's when they start to become a lie.

That's why it is important for us to find different paths and different information channels; that is why it is important for us to connect with other leftist media in other countries.

Our idea is to expand the concept that we have about the Havana Book Fair, based on this idea of hooking up with other leftist newspapers of the world and open up an international left-wing press office.

Therefore, we are searching for a concentration, a new country where we may concentrate and where we may support the development of the left-wing media and exchange ideas and experiences, to have a better connection, and in this regard the Internet is going to play a very important role.

It all started with the Havana Book Fair Office, which was established by many organizations working with Cuba in Germany: ‘*Cuba sí*,’ the friendship organization, the *Junge Welt* newspaper, the Network of Solidarity with Cuba in Germany, and the trade unions, and that was the way in which the whole idea started. In 2004 Germany was the host or the special guest of the Havana Book Fair and suddenly Germany refused to go to Havana. The reason they gave was that the human rights situation in Cuba had worsened. But that Book Fair Office in Havana organized in a very short time some German presentations that were to be brought to the Book Fair and suddenly the German participation was the biggest ever in the Havana Book Fair. More than 74 publishing houses attended the fair, and this time we are very happy to have Heinz Langer as a member of our delegation here at the Book Fair. Many of you know him because he was the GDR ambassador to Cuba and with him we are organizing presentations in the context of the Book Fair. We are going to launch two of his books; one of them is entitled *La ternura de los pueblos* (The Tenderness of the Peoples), and is about the cultural relations with Cuba; and the other book contains reflections on his experiences in Cuba. The two books are very important in the context of Germany in order to counter the distortion of Cuba’s reality as it is portrayed in Germany.

These will also be interesting for the youth in Cuba because—just as it happens with the youth in Germany—they know very little about a period that already belongs to the past. So, I wish you good luck at the Book Fair.

Thank you (Applause).

Esteban Llorach: Good evening.

Commander, when we were talking about preserving the environment, we were taking for granted that there is harmony between scientific and technical development and the environment; that there can be no environment without that harmony; that the only reason why the environment exists is the biota; that the only reason to preserve the environment is the existence of man; and for man to be able to exist, and for ideas to be preserved, there has to be peace; and for us to have

peace there must be freedom. For all of this to happen in the future, we must necessarily think of the new generations, and to be able to think of the new generations, we have to think that the new generations, like all of us here, are a product of the good, bad, or average systems of education that we have had throughout our lives.

If this meeting of intellectuals and their networks does not influence in some way the world's primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, the pre-university and university professors; if we do manage to turn them into spokespersons of that broad spectrum that we are discussing here; if we do not achieve the necessary coherence and cohesion between international events, I am referring, for example, to the next university congress that is going to be held here, or a recent conference that really fascinated me about "the audiovisual universe of the child," sponsored by ICAIC, or the Book Fair itself; in other words, if we do not resort to all possible mechanisms, the things that primary school children are going to grasp, a video, a cartoon character, anything that could explain to them what the environment is all about... I have been able to see how my young neighbors enjoy when the Cuban television airs the programs made by UNICEF or UNESCO.

I think that, in this regard, we have to work with the new generations so that they understand the importance of everything that has been said here, which I am not going to repeat: the preservation of the forests, etc.

In my view, there should be a greater participation of the networks in the communities that perhaps, as it will surely be the case, do not have computers, and have no way other means but their own teachers. We should not forget that, in this planet, teachers are the ones who make decisions about the teaching systems; and the teaching systems directly influence the value systems; the value systems shape up people's conscience.

For there to be peace, we must have value systems supported, above all, by all the media that men have to communicate with others; and these should be important media—I am going to give you an example, not a Cuban example. Here we

have Frabetti. In a book like *Calvina* he makes us think particularly about what it means to be human.

I think that children's and youth literature in Latin America, in the Spanish language, as well as the literature from other areas in the world, can contribute to the formation of the new man that you have been championing for so long. The entire Revolution, despite all its deficiencies, achievements, and non-conformities has tried that new man to be as he should be.

Thank you very much (Applause).

Abel Prieto: Allow me to say something, Commander, before giving the floor to Betto. Among the many National Prize recipients present here—Miguel, Eusebio, Roberto, Pablo Armando, Reynaldo, César—, sitting back there, beside Nancy and Fernando Martínez Heredia, there is Fina García Marruz, a great Christian and a follower of Martí's ideas, who was Cintio's companion in life and in work (Applause). I would like to ask Fina to stand up for a moment. That wonderful woman has been silent the whole time over there (Applause).

Commander: She received an award in recent days.

Abel Prieto: Yes.

Thanks for coming, Fina; lots of love to you.
Betto, my brother.

Frei Betto: Commander, it is with profound sadness that your excellent health condition and lucid mind is being witnessed. It is sadness for the enemies of this country and a great happiness for all of us, the friends of this country.

You have said that Chávez is concerned with every detail, and I like the Cuban social division of labor system: the people take care of economic production; Raul takes care of politics and Fidel takes care of ideology, as he is doing this afternoon that we are here.

There are two issues that perhaps have not been dealt with here, but I will start by the first which Pérez Esquivel briefly discussed.

When I am asked in what way the Cuban Revolution could be better known, I say: it is not enough to know the Cuban

history; it is not enough to know about Marxism; you have to know about the life and work of José Martí and to be able to understand Fidel—as Katiuska has done—you have to know about the Jesuit pedagogy.

The Jesuit pedagogy. Many people here like the comrade from Tunisia, Santiago Alba, have experienced today what it means to submit to an oral test in a Jesuit school (Laughter). It's hard. And that is where Fidel comes from.

I am not a Jesuit; I am not making any propaganda because I am Dominican, a religious order that has been traditionally known in the Church to be an adversary of the Jesuits. But since I am a friend of Fidel's, we Dominicans and Jesuits came to an understanding (Laughter).

In Jesuit tradition, there is a custom called a test of conscience, which in this country and in the Revolution is done under a different name. There was a time—I have been visiting Cuba for more than 30 years—when people here talked about emulation, then rectification, and now they talk about the Guidelines.

Look, should Stalinism still exist, these people here in Cuba would be called “rectificationists” (Laughter); but many are not aware that the changes here do not affect the Lampedusa lane, “To change so that everything stays as it is.” Changes are made to improve this social work of the Revolution, which is, in my view, a work that is not only political, ideological, or economic; it is an evangelical work. Because, what does the Jesus evangelism mean? It means to feed the hungry, heal the sick, succor the helpless, and give jobs to the jobless. This is written in the Gospel.

Thus, in that sense, I am saying that this is a transcendental work. But very often, we in progressive movements are not very much doing what the Cuban Revolution is doing, that is, our tests of conscience or our self-criticism.

Why are there no progressive movements elsewhere in the world other than in Latin America? In the face of the financial crisis in Europe, what proposals do we have? People talk about ‘Occupying Wall Street.’ Well, an indignation movement has been created: but many do not realize that Wall Street means

‘the street of the wall,’ and as long as this wall doesn’t fall, our anger won’t will not get anywhere; it will be good for us, not for the people (Applause). And for that wall to fall, there are two things that are fundamental, and those two things have been practiced in the history of the Cuban Revolution. First, to have a project, not just anger; to have a purpose and goals. And second, popular roots, contact with the people.

Gramsci used to say, “People experience life, but very often they don’t understand their situation. We, the intellectuals, understand the reality but we do not experience it.”

Much has been said here about the Internet, and I think it is a very important battle trench; but I have 13,000 followers on Twitter, and that is something important. Now, I must confess I feel much happier working with 13 peasants, 13 jobless, or 13 workers. Many a time our movements speak on behalf of the people, they want to be the peoples’ vanguard, they write for the people but they do not commit with that people (Applause). We should engage in some sort of political sanitation. People do not smell good to us, the intellectuals, the artists, the intelligent, and the educated beings. And if people do not go anywhere, we are not going anywhere.

Here is the only country in Latin America that made a successful revolution; because there were other revolutions, even in Nicaragua a short time ago, but the one that succeeded was this Revolution. Because it is a revolution that was not like the one that happened in Eastern Europe; that was like a ‘wig socialism,’ that was worn from the top to the bottom. That was not the case here, where the hair came from the bottom to the top.

And speaking of hair, I was following the hair equation at this table, because Zuleica has short hair, Abel has long hair, and Fidel is the balance (Laughter), and virtue is right in the middle. But since it is getting late and I know that the Commander still has to receive three delegations tonight, make eight international calls, read three books and more or less 200 cables, because the prescription for this working capacity is a Cuban state secret, you shouldn’t expect to know it, because we will never know (Laughter).

I draw your attention on this: we have to do some self-criticism: how is our social interaction for political mobilization? And, what type of societies are we projecting together with the people, the indigenous peoples, the peasants, the jobless.

The second topic is very important and it wasn't mentioned here: President Lula Da Silva convened it and President Dilma supported it, so from June 20 to 22 this year, the Río Plus 20 conference will meet in Rio de Janeiro. The Commander attended that conference in 1992 and there he made his shortest speech: it lasted only seven minutes—which caused an international surprise because the people were thinking that he was going to speak way too long (Laughter). But he said a phrase that has been consecrated, “We have to save the main endangered species, which is the human species.”

What do we have to do between today and June? First, to convince our governments that they should be present at Río de Janeiro. We cannot allow that all those heads of State turn their backs on the environmental question, because it is not a matter of saving the environment, it is a matter of saving everything.

The problem is very serious; but the G-8 people are not interested in that. Obama went to Copenhagen because he had been mistakenly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize—which was a disgrace to Esquivel—, and he had to go through Copenhagen to get to Oslo; he had to make a technical stopover; he went to the conference to make a demagogic speech, because in fact he is not committed to what he said.

So we have two tasks: mobilize the heads of State of our countries, convince them to be present in Río de Janeiro; because to be present there is to support an effective environmental preservation project, to save humanity, to save this planet that has lost 30 per cent of its capacity for self-generation. Either there is a human intervention or we are heading towards an apocalypse, a catastrophe.

A second thing: the Summit of the Peoples is going to be held there and President Dilma told us in Porto Alegre, at the Thematic Social Forum, that this meeting is more important than the meeting of the heads of State.

So, all of our movements have to be present for this Summit to ring loud and clear throughout the entire world and increasingly mobilize and make more people aware of this environmental project that, given its urgency, it also has a very curious political dimension because, of all political subjects, ecology is the only one that doesn't make any difference between classes.

Ecological issues are like international flights; there are three categories: First Class, Executive Class, and Economy Class. But when the plane goes down, everybody dies just the same, there are no privileges.

Therefore, from children to the wealthiest, there are people who are sensitive to this subject, and we have to work on that.

I conclude, Commander, thanking you for your patience, your dialogue with this group; thanking you for your capacity to listen. Perhaps we have often spoken for too long.

I also thank Abel, Zuleica, all our comrades in Cuba who have brought us here, who have encouraged us; I thank the people of Cuba who are listening to us, who are interested in this discussion, in this conversation.

And I would like to ask God to bless this country, and I especially thank the Lord for your life and ask Him to bless your health.

Thank you very much (Applause).

Commander: Now, what do you expect? Do you expect me to say something? I should say something. What shall I say? See you soon! (Laughter).

Well, last time I committed myself to meet again in another meeting. I am pleased that I have been able to meet with you today. I am not going to make any speech. All I will do is to make some comments on some news, which is what is needed to explain why I believe that the situation is complex.

And what I'd like to do is not to make Frei Betto look bad and talk for less than seven minutes; but, anyway, I don't think I'm going to be able to do that, but at least not more than twice, I hope, and never more than three times. You will see.

I brought some of the news I usually read everyday. Now, let's look at this one:

“Advances in neurosciences could be taken advantage of by the armed forces and in the future it will be possible to connect weapons directly to the brains of soldiers and create drugs that will improve the performance of friendly forces and mitigate the performance of enemy forces. These are some of the applications that, according to the Royal Society (The Royal Academy of Sciences of the United Kingdom), are expected to be achieved thanks to the understanding we now have of the human brain.”

This comes from the BBC, an English source, the second colonial power, the father of the current empire, which can afford to issue news. They do not make up news; the BBC collects the existing news. We have to know who is saying what, because each news agency has a certain level of responsibility.

“During the recruitment process, individuals will be submitted to brain scans so that the ones with the best capabilities could be selected, depending on the requirements of the task.”

“Perhaps one of the most sophisticated applications of this new technology is the possibility to directly connect a soldier's brain, his weapons, or drones (unmanned planes).”

The news goes on in great length on this subject. In case you are interested, you can look it up; it is dated Tuesday, February 7, 2012, by the BBC. Because here we have all kinds of news that did not get to us before; it is a tremendous news bombardment. News comes from everywhere and I have been reading news wires every day for many years now. I can see the change; it is massive. That was one of them.

“IRAN PREPARES ITS DEFENCE TO COUNTER WESTERN PLANS.” It is dated the 7th.

“The Iranian Minister of Defence, Ahmad Vahidi, announced the implementation of 21 new defence systems, as well as telecommunications, optical, and electronic products and projects, reports the Iranian news agency FARS.”

“Precious metals: gold.”

“MARKETS LOOKING AT GREECE.” This is also from Reuters.

“BRENT OIL PRICE RISES DUE TO THE COLD WAVE IN EUROPE AND TENSION IN IRAN.”

“Brent Oil rose on Monday, to its highest level in six months, going above \$ 116 per barrel.”

“MEDEIEV SAYS THAT SECRET SERVICES DETECTED SOME 200 SPIES IN 2011,” and that is the great power. In Cuba we don't need so many, only just a few, and they are volunteers.

“RUSSIAN SCIENTISTS REACH AN ANTARCTIC LAKE WITH THE OLDEST WATER ON THE PLANET.” In the Antarctic they have discovered, by drilling, the oldest water in the planet. “The lake is around 300 kilometers long, 50 kilometers wide, and almost 1000 metres deep. In some zones, the Vostok is a mass of fresh water in liquid state that is found at the epicentre of the sixth continent, as Antarctica is known.

“It has an area of 15,690 square kilometers, similar to the Baikal Lake in Siberia, the largest fresh water reserve in the world, and it is also the largest subterranean lake of the 100 that are found under the Antarctic ice.

They say that “they hope to find life forms dating back to tens of millions of years,” etc.

“They were convinced that it had water since they reached the depth of 3,583 metres..., this is probably the purest and oldest water in the planet.”

They are looking for life forms there.

“A MUSHROOM THAT ‘DEVOURS’ PLASTIC IS FOUND IN THE AMAZONE.”

“U.S. scientists discovered a mushroom in the jungles of Ecuador.” Here we have the lady from Ecuador; maybe this mushroom is at that little spot that you are preserving (Laughter).

“... the *Pestalotiopsis microspora* is capable of degrading polyurethane by using it as a food source.” Until now it was believed that this type of plastic could not interact with the natural processes of decomposition and recycling of material.

“A group of molecular biochemistry students from the University of Yale, led by Professor Scott Strobel, went deep into the Amazonian jungle to ‘experience the scientific research process in a broad-based and creative manner.’” Just

look at how new things are appearing, new life forms that get eliminated with all those policies that carry on there.

Here we have Associated Press, “The 2011–2012 soybean harvest will be reduced by 47 per cent in Asunción, as compared to the previous season, due to the prolonged drought and the interruption of planting in Brazilian farms that remain paralyzed by the protests of the landless peasants. The poor harvest will reduce revenues by 1.5 billion dollars.”

Associated Press, “A Spaniard has found a hand grenade from the Second World War among the potatoes he was selling to a customer, as informed on Tuesday by the *Guardia Civil*.”

A Second World War hand grenade found among some potatoes.

Here we have another about Cristina’s announcement. “EXPECTATIONS ABOUT CRISTIANA FERNÁNDEZ’ ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE FALKLANDS AT MOMENTS OF INCREASING TENSION WITH GREAT BRITAIN REGARDING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE ARCHIPELAGO.”

“*Página/12*: A newspaper siding with the government declared that the conflict between Buenos Aires and London could take a turn this afternoon when the president announces a series of important measures.”

Good. Here it reads, “SANTOS WELCOMES THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS.”

“THE U.S. IS SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE PROMISES MADE BY ASSAD TO RUSSIA.”

“On Tuesday the U.S. received with scepticism the promises made by President Bashar al-Assad of Syria to Russian Foreign Minister Serguei Lavrov about democratic stabilization and believe that violent repression should end immediately.”

“BOLIVIA ASKS THE U.S. TO SUPPORT ITS TRADITION OF CHEWING COCA LEAVES,” a custom that is thousands of years old, to ban it doesn’t mean to negotiate, and, curiously enough, this is what they have banned the most; but it is not tea. The British can drink all the tea they want, but this is a Bolivian custom, chewing the leaves, which seems to arise from the conditions ... These problems had never been mentioned, the

problem of drug smuggling, the U.S. market; all these problems are quite different.

“INSULZA: CUBA HAS NOT REQUESTED THE RESUMPTION OF THE DIALOGUE TO RETURN TO THE OAS.” Where has this man been living on? (Laughter). On which planet?

“HOW MUCH DOES THE U.S. AND ISRAEL AGREE ON IRAN?”

“BBC-World, Washington: After a series of comments that pointed to the possibility that Israel might be preparing a unilateral attack on Iran to put a halt to its presumed nuclear weapons program, U.S. President Barack Obama assured that his country is working together with the government of Benjamin Netanyahu on the measures they will take against Tehran.

“Washington and Tel Aviv are staunch allies but Obama and Netanyahu do not have a very warm relationship and they have gone head to head over several Middle Eastern security subjects.”

“In terms of the Iranian nuclear program, analysts point out that both governments agree on the result that suits them both but not on the tactics to use in order to achieve it; this has unleashed speculations on a possible Israeli unilateral attack.”

“Last week, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak stated that the window of opportunity to take decided action against the Iranian nuclear program was closing and that, if sanctions do not work, they would have to consider the military option.”

The entire news wire deals with unsuccessful operatives, etc., etc.

Well then, that’s one day’s worth of news; they are dated Tuesday. Of course, I have selected the main wires from the many I saw.

Abel, let’s divide them up; put them over there; there is no room for them here. Put them over there.

Now, listen to this, how curious. This is from the 8th.

“MILLIONAIRES’ CHILDREN PENNILESS. A NEW TREND THAT IS GAINING FANS.”

“Millionaires leaving their children penniless may sound unlikely but it appears that this attitude is starting to be a trend.”

This, “MILLIONAIRE’S SON WITHOUT A DIME IS A NEW TREND THAT IS GAINING FANS.” This was broadcast by Russia Today, which is a Russian TV channel that is coming up with a lot of news as of late. This one did not appear, now with the spotlight on all these problems, there are some interesting matters that appear in the reports. Some news do not appear anywhere else.

“The most famous altruist among the richest persons of the planet: the founder of the Microsoft giant, Bill Gates.”

Here it is, “Bill Gates has 50 billion dollars, he founded Microsoft, and has proposed sending half of his fortune to people in need of money.”

Well, this clears it up; these are his own words. “In 2008 Bill Gates abandoned his routine work at Microsoft to dedicate himself full-time to charity.” Now, that is the first one.

The other one, “Warren Buffett”—he is like millionaire No. 2— “a successful inventor and head of the Berkshire Hathaway Company, who in 2010 was the third richest man in the world, agrees with Gates on the subject of his children’s inheritance. Buffett has three children just like Gates and he assures he will be leaving a limited inheritance to his children.”

Another, 2006, “Buffet stated that 99 per cent of his fortune shall be going to charity, either while he is still alive or after his death.

“On the other hand, the film director George Lucas, ‘father’ of *Star Wars*, also plans to leave his children with a minimal percentage of his possessions.

“As for the owner of CNN, Ted Turner”—they say he is the owner; I met this gentleman when there was no CNN, it wasn’t even international.

And the list could go on growing.

Four of the biggest millionaires are putting forward this idea. They own money, but where did this money come from? Who paid for all this? How can one man own 50 billion dollars? No matter how smart he may be, there must be thousands of men who are far more intelligent than him, who have made greater contributions, and yet, none of them has 50 billion. And so now they come across this idea... and so they decide

where the hell they are going to leave all this money. But it is a sign of the times. They divide it up.

Here is another one, from the 8th.

“A KEY PROTEIN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROSTATE CANCER IS DISCOVERED.”

“... U.S. scientists identified a new protein that has a key role in the formation...,” against cancer, etc.

It goes on to explain, “Biologists managed to show that the inactivation of this protein inhibits the function of the receptor, and this leads to the complete suppression of cancerous cell growth in the tissue cultivated in the lab...” in rats.

Fine. “DISCOVERY OF THE OLDEST AQUATIC PLANT IN THE WORLD.”

“Australian scientists assure they have discovered the oldest marine organism on the planet. It is a plant approximately 200,000 years old”—a 200,000 year-old plant isn’t that old (Laughter), plants are millions of years old, at least that life form—“and it was found in the Mediterranean. According to some biologists, the plant reproduces itself via a cloning process.

“The plant belongs to the species *Oceanica posidonia* and was found 15 kilometers far from the Spanish island of Formentera by the biologist Carlos Duarte from the University of Western Australia.

“As part of his work, this researcher collected samples of genetic material in 40 different places.” They start creating an entire monopoly over medicines and later on, the patents, and later on, the prices that are to be paid to purchase that. And I am saying this because Cuba has advanced a lot in the struggle against the various forms of cancer, and this is very important. They have all this under control.

“MARINE SPONGE: THE FIRST LIVING BEINGS ON EARTH.” Now they have discovered they were the first.

“The first animal of our planet is similar to microscopic sea sponges, say researchers from Saint Andrews University in the United Kingdom. The discovery of the ancestor of the first living beings on Earth sets back the date for the start of animal life between 100 and 150 millions of years.”



The Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz addresses the participants during the dialogue.

“The international team of scientists headed by Anthony Prave found microscopic fossils in a 760 million-year-old rock in the Etosha National Park in Namibia.”

“PARACHUTIST”—now everyone is entering some kind of competition—“IS GOING TO JUMP FROM THE STRATOSPHERE TO BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER.” Now this guy is going to smash into one of these..., he falls and the chute doesn’t open.

“Extreme sportsman Felix Baumgartner will attempt to become the first person to reach the speed of sound with a free-fall jump from a height of more than 36 kilometers, which he will reach on board of a balloon.” He reaches that height and then jumps off in a parachute to break the speed of sound barrier.

Well, he can’t be too calm; it is publicity and everything that causes this kind of alienation in people, and all of them get killed because one guy is flying... Every so often there are episodes like that.

Anyway, back to the sponges (The Commander goes over the news wires).

Take, Abel; I have already read two.

Now comes this, from the 9th.

“HARVARD: COFFEE WILL BE INHALED IN THE FUTURE.”

“A Harvard expert says that in the future people will stop drinking coffee and, instead, they are going to inhale their caffeine from a lipstick-sized tube.” So those of you who love coffee, get ready (Laughter).

“It is a product called AeroShot; it came out in the stores at the end of January in Massachusetts and New York, as well as in France.

“This product, which some critics warn could bring about some risks, costs \$2.99—that’s not very expensive; it doesn’t cost \$3.00, but \$2.99—“and is sold in grocery stores, liquor stores—and on the Internet.”

“New York Democratic Senator Charles Schumer asked the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to analyze AeroShot.”

“The politician said that he fears it will be used as a drug in nightclubs, so that young people can keep on drinking alcoholic beverages until they pass out.” What a great future for the youth!

“USDA: ESTIMATED CUTBACKS IN SEED HARVESTS IN SOUTH AMERICA BECAUSE OF THE DROUGHT.”

“A severe South American drought reduced the size of harvests of soybean and corn in the region, even though it was not as severe as anticipated, said the U.S. government on Thursday; it projected that export shortages in Argentina and Brazil will be replaced with U.S. seeds.

“Corn stocks in the U.S. will fall to their lowest level in 16 years; this means a 5 per cent reduction in January projections.” Every day there are news like this about foodstuffs.

“Israeli schools affected by low proficiency.” They are complaining that they will lose their privileged position; they speak of the reduced number of Nobel Laureates they have as a result of neglect. They say these make up only a small group. They also say that others do not have these advantages, that the ones enrolled in Arab schools don’t know anything. There is an AP news cable dedicated to this.

One positive piece of news, “PAHO ASKS AMERICAN COUNTRIES TO BAN ADVERTISING AND INCREASE TAXES ON TOBACCO.”

Well, we are producers of that poison; that's what we were given.

“PAHO acknowledged the progress achieved in the region since the approval of the Framework Agreement for the Control of Tobacco in 2005, especially in the adoption of effective measures to reduce the consumption of and exposure to tobacco smoke.”

“FAO RATE FOR THE WORLD PRICE OF FOODS GOES UP BY 2 PER CENT IN JANUARY.”

“World food prices increased by almost 2 per cent in January as compared to the previous month, pushed by the increase in the prices of vegetable oil and grains, FAO figures showed on Thursday.”

Here, “The rate measuring monthly changes in prices for a food basket of grain, oilseeds, dairy products, meat, and sugar averaged 240; fourteen points in January, four more than in December, FAO stated.

“FAO raised its estimates on the world grain production to 2,327 million tons, up by 4.6 million tons compared to the previous projection... increased the panorama of world supplies of grain by the end of the 2012 season by 5 million tons to 516 million.” They need almost 40 million tons more per year.

These are the news.

“WARNING ON CHEMICAL LEAKAGE”—this is from the 8th—“on the Yangtze River in China.

“The Shanghai authorities are on the alert following a chemical leakage that polluted the Yangtze River, the main water source for the most densely populated city in China, although it seemed there were no health risks, the *Shanghai Daily* published on Wednesday.”

When it comes to pollution, that is the largest river in China.

Now this, “JAPAN'S CURRENT ACCOUNT SURPLUS IS THE LOWEST IN 15 YEARS.”

“Japan's current account surplus fell considerably in 2011 to its lowest level in 15 years, and even though foreign investments compensated for the fall in terms of the exchange rate, there are still questions about how Tokyo will finance its enormous public debt.”

Here is a cable on Evo Morales. "... today at the UN that there is no political persecution against opposition after agencies asked him that his adversaries be tried impartially, based on their presumptive innocence and with transparency in cases of alleged corruption, a process that is being promoted by the government ."

And here there is one from the 10th.

"Moscow, ANSA: Special forces from Qatar and Great Britain acting on Syrian territory, stated the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mijail Bogdanov, who was quoted by his country's press agency ITAR-TASS."

In the last few days, some international media sources referred to this.

"UN ABANDONS BODY COUNT DUE TO EXCESSIVE VIOLENCE."

Another one from Syria. "... who allegedly committed or ordered crimes against humanity must be tried by the International Criminal Court, the UN Human Rights Office indicated on Friday. 'We think, we have said this and we will continue to reiterate it: the case of Syria belongs to the International Criminal Court. This would send a strong message to those who are putting on these shows,' said Rupert Colville, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Navi Pillay."

"Pillay will speak at a General Assembly session on Syria, Monday, in New York. 'I think they are considering a resolution the content of which I don't know,' she added."

Another one about that: "Former UN judge for war crimes requested an urgent international action on Wednesday to protect civilians in Syria, saying that she was moved by the massacres carried out by the army in the city of Homs." All this is the campaign, what they have been created around Syria.

Here is what I said about the Qatar forces; about the water crisis. Oh!, "ON SUNDAY THE OPPOSITION ELECTS CHÁVEZ' RIVAL TO THE PRESIDENCY OF VENEZUELA."

"On Sunday the Venezuelan opposition celebrates some unusual primaries to elect its presidential candidate. Governor Henrique Capriles"—who belongs to this large advertising company—"is the favorite candidate. He has the challenge of

organizing a huge mobilization to pass his first acid test before the October elections when he will run against Hugo Chávez.”

Here there is an explanation of all that.

“Capriles, who is a lawyer, single, and looking for a ‘first lady,’ as he likes to joke, promises through a simple message to maintain and improve the social policies of Chávez — that has made him so popular among the popular classes —, but also to change the ‘form’ of governing.

“Chávez proposes a path towards socialism: a State that wants to own everything. I propose a path towards progress, the candidate assures, who wants to ‘apply’ the Brazilian model in Venezuela by encouraging the private sector but leaving the State at the center of the social programs.

Fourteen years after beginning his political career as chairman of the House of Deputies, the young governor promises to eliminate indefinite re-election, based on which Chávez hopes to govern until the year 2031.” This is an AFP cable, disseminating the Venezuelan drama throughout the world.

Here it explains, “According to the ‘explanation given’ by political analyst and social psychologist Mercedes Pulido to AFP, it is ‘difficult’ to revert some of these so unanimous surveys, even though the risk for Capriles is that part of his electorate stays home thinking that ‘since their candidate is going to win, there is no need to vote.’”

“The MUD opposition coalition (Democratic Unity Table) shall organize the primaries for which 7600 polling stations will be installed all over the country” — that is something unheard of; see how all the enemies get together and stay united to defeat Chávez — “MUD urged Venezuelans to vote and guaranteed confidentiality in the ballots.”

“THE VATICAN DESCRIBES AS ‘DELIRIOUS’ THE REPORTS OF A PLOT AGAINST THE POPE.”

“On Friday, the Vatican described as ‘delirious’ the information published by an Italian newspaper stating that Pope Benedict XVI would be assassinated in 12 months.”

“‘These are delirious ravings that in no way can be taken seriously,’ said Father Federico Lombardi, chief Vatican spokesman.”



Fidel Castro Ruz

You [Frei Betto] must be aware of this one.

Here it reads, “SPAIN SHOULD INVESTIGATE CRIMES COMMITTED UNDER FRANCO’S REGIME, SAYS THE UN.”

“The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated on Friday her concern for Judge Baltasar Garzón, tried in Spain for investigating the crimes committed under Franco’s regime, and said that the Spanish Amnesty Law ... runs counter to international law.”

“‘Judges should not be subject to criminal persecution for having done their job,’ the spokesman declares.” What a mess.

Here, “... The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) and the Regional UNICEF Office launched a guideline to estimate infant poverty ... to promote regular measurement of this problem, with a legal approach in the region.”

CEPAL has a good position, it is arguing against that, and it is a serious organization. Its Executive Secretary was here recently; she is Mexican.

Now, see this one; this is what I've been talking about: "Ways of reversing the effects of Alzheimer's on the brain have been found"; look at that.

"U.S. scientists have managed to cleared up the harmful protein plaques that are formed on the brains of Alzheimer's patients with a drug used to fight cancer.

"In the study with lab rats, the drug, which was approved to treat skin cancer, cleaned up the plaques 'with unprecedented speed,' states the research published in *Science* magazine.

"Later tests showed an improvement in the animals' brain functions, it adds."

"We think that one of the principal characteristics of Alzheimer's disease is the accumulation of fragments of a protein called beta-amyloid."

"Every human being produces this protein in the brain, but healthy individuals have a mechanism that helps to decompose these fragments."

"However, in Alzheimer's patients, this mechanism does not work and only causes the accumulation and formation of the beta-amyloid plaques, resulting in damage to and the death of neurons and eventual problems with memory and other cognitive skills."

"'This is an unprecedented find,' states Dr. Paige Cramer who directed the study."

"Previously, the best available treatment for Alzheimer's in lab rats took several months to reduce the plaques in the brain."

Another piece of news, "CHINESE FOREIGN TRADE DECREASES IN JANUARY. DRAMATIC FALL IN IMPORTS."

And that is buyer No. 1. "China announced this Friday a decrease in foreign trade in January. Exports put the blame on the Lunar New Year holidays and the crisis in Europe, as well as the damages on imports as a result of a weak domestic demand."

Another one, “BRITISH PRIME MINISTER REPLIES TO THE ARGENTINEAN LEADER ON THE FALKLANDS ISSUE.”

“On Thursday, British Prime Minister David Cameron answered the president of Argentina about her plans to protest at the UN against the ‘militarization’ of the Falklands, saying that the islanders will have London’s respect for as long as they want to keep on being British.”

“The Argentinean Foreign Ministry said it would complain before the UN, at the time when bilateral tensions were growing prior to the thirtieth anniversary of the Falklands War ... It stated that the Argentinean Minister of Foreign Affairs will submit a formal complaint to the UN Security Council and its General Assembly.”

“It also criticized the trip of Prince William, second heir to the British throne, to the islands as a military rescue pilot. Great Britain has denied the militarization of the South Atlantic and claims that its ‘defensive position’ in the islands remains unchanged.”

“The Argentinean Foreign Ministry announced that the Minister of Foreign Affairs would be meeting on Friday with the President of the UN Security Council to discuss the denunciation presented by the South American country against the alleged militarization of the South Atlantic by Great Britain.

“He will also meet with the UN General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser”—that is the president, not the secretary—“and with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.” That is the problem facing Argentina.

“IRAN IS RESORTING TO BARTERING TO BUY FOODSTUFFS BECAUSE OF THE SANCTIONS.”

“Iran is resorting to bartering, offering gold ingots and oil in exchange for food, due to the new financial sanctions that are affecting its capacity to import basic commodities for the population, operators said, on Thursday.”

“The difficulty to cover important needs has contributed to steep price increases in food, thus causing problems for its 74 million inhabitants, weeks before an election considered to be a referendum on the economic policies of President Ahmadinejad.” It is well known that the leadership of the country is in the hands of the Ayatollah.”

“New sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union to punish Iran for its nuclear program do not prevent companies from selling food to Teheran, but they complicate the financial transactions required to pay for the purchases.”

“Reuters polls among operators of raw materials throughout the world revealed that since the beginning of the year, Iran has had problems to import basic commodities such as rice, cooking oil, fodder, and tea. Ships loaded with grain wait outside the ports because they refuse to make their deliveries without payments.” All forms of payment are being blocked.

What can a country under such circumstances and with 74 million people do? And all that is to prevent Iran from having nuclear weapons after they have promoted the development of more than 300 nuclear weapons in Israel, which has not acknowledged whether it has them or not.

In that very critical region a nuclear power has been promoted with 300 missiles and sophisticated weaponry, while arms are being sold to Saudi Arabia for 60 million dollars.

The United States is the largest arms exporting country. It is engaged almost exclusively in the export of arms; and all the States of the Union have some kind of interest in that, because one has a factory to produce something, another one produces something else... it's a kind of job, it's a resource... and then there's the money...

None of those weapons can equate Saudi Arabia to Israel, but they sell it 60 billion dollars worth of arms, and then they sell to Qatar, and they sell to the whole world. That's what the U.S. economy is about; that's what they have ended up doing... like some millionaires who do all those businesses and then play the good guys, and then go and give away money to some charity. But who will they give that money to? We should ask them; we should look for that cable, call them and ask them “Hey, please, give an interview.” Maybe they will answer one of those funny telephones. What do you think, Randy?

Randy Alonso: They are now trying to get other millions to join that campaign, and make a lot of publicity about it.

Commander: But we should ask them in writing where those generous millionaires intend to invest that money in; they will donate part of it to their children. I guess they will also leave them yachts, planes, and so forth. Meanwhile, they accumulate fabulous amounts, 50 billion or more. That's the system. Where does that system lead to? It leads to a dead end.

I have referred to these issues on previous occasions; I analyzed the food production growth; I made reference to the statements by one of the most prestigious experts, Chester Brown, from the U.S., who studied in India; and I mentioned another one who has also won international awards. They have gone through the information about the food production growth as the world population has experienced a twofold increase in the last decades; our planet has now a little over 7 billion inhabitants.

I remember clearly when we came to be 3 billion; it was after the 1960s. In 1971, Nixon eliminated the gold standard, and the price of gold soared to 50 times the 35 dollars per Troy ounce of the Bretton Woods days. The price of goods has not increased as much because the machinery available boosted productivity and prevented such spectacular price hikes. Exploitation of the least developed countries increased dramatically. Do you know how much, for example, an African cocoa producing country gets from the chocolate made in the United States, Canada, or any of its other allied rich countries? One tenth of what is made by those who process and market cocoa.

Reference has been made here to the way the transnational companies are purchasing land in Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere in the world. In just one year, in 2008, they bought 400,000 square kilometers of land, or 40 million hectares. This is another problem that is linked to the food crisis. In the United States, on the other hand, they devote almost 200 million tons of grains to biofuel production. According to estimates, 300 million people could be fed from the grains used to produce biofuels in the United States.

These data are extremely important. I think that going over these issues would not give anyone a twinge of conscience, and whoever wishes to present opinions and views is

welcomed to do so. After all, we are meeting here to discuss the problems, in search of the truth and of possible solutions. Nobody can feel happy about the risks that we are facing. I told you about these news cables, but they don't say even the fundamental truth, and that truth is the increasing danger of war that is threatening us all.

To me it is very difficult, and I mean really difficult, for the Iran issue to be solved easily. The United States and its allies are wagering on the people giving in, which is very dangerous. Eisenhower advocated the blockade on Cuba to make the people rebel against the Revolutionary Government out of hunger and suffering; so he said and so it was written.

The United States' wager is that the population's economic plight, sufferings and hardships will put the Iranian government in crisis mode, and that the people will themselves topple that country's government which rebelled against imperialist plundering and exploitation.

I believe that under such circumstances, people in fact become irritated and unite against that type of aggression. On Iran—a country with a long history and deep religious convictions—they are trying the selective killing of scientists. They have identified the most capable; they monitor them and kill them... all that is known now... it has been written by reporters who defend Israel.

The United States and NATO cannot have the right to create a nuclear power in that critical region and demand that Iran should not have even nuclear fuel. They claim that if Iran produces nuclear fuel, it can go further and enrich uranium, and produce nuclear weapons. They intend to forbid that the others deny it, and there is no way to prove that they are in breach of agreements. This way the world will never achieve peace and the dangerous wager will become even more dangerous.

We have to look at another picture: the huge machines shattering Palestinian houses to construct large buildings and a wall that's far worse than the Berlin Wall. The wall was among the major sources of criticism against the Democratic Republic of Germany and against the USSR. Antagonistic troops occupied their positions. The wall was the main talking

point all the time. However, a monstrous wall is being erected around Palestine, which is denied even the right to belong to UNESCO. Where can the Palestinians go when they're expelled from the land that was their home for tens of hundreds of years? Is it possible to solve the Middle East peoples' problems with wars, massacres, and walls? They are piling up, and they have nowhere to go.

Water supplies are wearing out, and the Jordan River is turning into a thin stream.

The Iraqis are also having water problems because the Turks are occupying the water resources; in fact, that water belongs also to Iraq and Syria, and is becoming increasingly scarce.

Obama is now faced with a very serious problem: he can neither leave nor stay. If he pulls out from Iraq, he will have a government there that is not Sunni but Shiite, and the Shiites are friendly to Iran and not to the United States.

Several political leaders in that region made big mistakes. I criticized Saddam's chemical war on Iran. A meeting that was held here in Havana—whose date coincided with the Argentinean forces' occupation of the Falklands—was attended by Calderas, as President of an international parliamentary group, and other leaders of that group, among them the President of that country's Congress. I talked for quite a while with the Venezuelan politician who was heading the group.

The Foreign Minister of Argentina, which was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, was invited to that meeting, and—for the same reason—invitations had been extended also to the Foreign Ministers of other countries like Syria, whose government was in friendly terms with Iran that was then fighting against the unwarranted aggression from neighboring Iraq. Cuba was the host of that meeting in its capacity as President of the Movement. I talked to the Syrian Foreign Minister, of course. I tried to talk him into helping to persuade Iran not to cross into Iraq once it managed to expel the invaders, in order to avoid critical damage to peace in the region. Among other reasons, it was necessary to prevent the Iraqis from turning that adventure into a patriotic fight.

I still remember, as if it were only yesterday, the stubborn Syrian saying, “No!, they have to move forward, because the USSR didn’t stop when it reached the German border, it continued forward.” To me, that was the wrong perspective. Somewhat annoyed, I replied, “Why don’t they continue forward into Egypt? Why don’t they occupy Cairo?” I was not advocating for that; all I wanted was to prevent that war from becoming a patriotic war for the Iraqi attackers. Incidentally, Nasser had died already and his mediocre successors had betrayed the Arab cause.

The Iranians were justifiably outraged about the unjust war that had been imposed upon them. They exercised their right to counterattack and occupied the major city in southern Iraq, on the banks of the Euphrates River, and established a stronghold there. Then what we feared actually happened.

Everybody had helped the Iraqis in that war. The British sold them steel, the Soviets sold them ammunition, the whole of Europe did business to help Iraq. Still worse, the Yankees had supplied them with the raw materials and the means to develop the chemical weapons that they used against the people of Iran.

The Iranians fought the aggression with such bravery that they cleared the minefields marching to their adversaries’ positions.

Saddam—who had played a positive role before that war—was investing efficiently in industries and in the economy, although he had serious discrepancies with the Syrians as they belonged to the same Baath party. This predetermined his positions in the region.

Initially, his relations with Khomeini were good. The Iranian even lived in Iraq. Later, there were disagreements between him and Saddam. The Ayatollah left for Paris where he led his struggle against the Shah—who was a U.S. ally—, which ended in a sweeping victory over him and his powerful army. Such differences were not known.

At the time, we held meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement here; Iraq was to become the President of the Movement as it was going to host the following summit meeting. It

enjoyed prestige, had good relations with the rest of the countries, and was not at war with anyone.

Our relations with them were good. I met Saddam when I travelled from Algeria to Vietnam in 1973. He met with me in Baghdad, when he was vice president of the country and head of the Baath party. He was very kind. He showed me the main river that runs across Iraq's capital city—and which, by the way, is quite narrow now—and he took me to see major historical works and to take part in activities that were taking place. From the beginning we provided medical assistance to the Iraqis, well before the unfortunate war on Iran. The worst came later: the pretext that they facilitated for the first imperialist war on Iraq. We sent to Baghdad some people that he held in high esteem to persuade him that occupying Kuwait was a very serious mistake. I even sent him a personal letter suggesting that he should try to solve the problem and avoid an absurd war, and telling him that, in my view, he should withdraw from that country.

I argued that Iraq was not Vietnam; it didn't have jungles; and no one could assist that country in the face of a U.S. aggression. However, there was no way to persuade him. He said that there was going to be “the mother of all wars,” and he repeated that again, and again. Drawn by that idea, he sent his best force—the Republican Guard—into Kuwait which is mostly a desert country.

That position was unsustainable. The U.S. military has its organizations made up by high-ranking people, either retired or soon-to-be retired; they like to talk about historical topics. More than once, some of them came to visit Cuba, mainly towards the end of the 20 twentieth century. We like to exchange views about those topics too. They were well-trained people who knew their trade.

I once talked to one of the chiefs who led his forces against the Republican Guard when it was withdrawing over the wide desert that separates Kuwait and Baghdad. The group we sent to meet with Saddam conveyed our view that the Guard was Iraq's best organized and equipped force and was being exposed to total destruction. When the Yankees launched the

air raids they occupied the territory quickly. The Republican Guard had no chance to escape. Undoubtedly, and for whatever reason, the attackers wasted time. Also, Saddam took too long to withdraw from Kuwait. In the middle of the desert, they were in fact defenseless before the enemy planes. However, had those troops been strongly positioned at the capital city they would have been a tough adversary for any invading force. As we know, military technology changes very quickly, but such was the situation then. Anyway, in that absurd war, the Guard suffered many casualties and its tanks were attacked with enriched uranium ammunition, something that had very serious consequences.

It was a costly adventure. What happened later, we already know. Bush senior was not reelected. Clinton took office. Then, an alcoholic—not well treated medically—came to power in the United States.

A brutal attack claimed the lives of thousands of innocent U.S. citizens. It was no less than what dad's son needed. He declares at the West Point graduation ceremony that the United States should be ready to strike in 60 or more dark corners of the world.

The big adventure started with the invasion of Afghanistan, where the United States had trained and armed the people who planned the attack. Some time later they came up with ridiculous lies, and with those false pretexts he ordered the second Iraq invasion. He occupied the country mercilessly; they pillaged its historical treasures—what the colonialists had not been able to take away—and they captured Saddam and hanged him. He was really courageous, despite his mistakes. He did not give in to the invaders.

What has been the cost of the Yankee invasion? Some speak of a million civilians killed in addition to those who were forced to migrate, or left without a job and food, and the sick that had no medical assistance, and those who disappeared, and the Iraqis who sacrificed their lives in anonymity.

Now, after so many acts of barbarism, there isn't and there can't be peace. Every now and then there is a suicide bomb attack. The transnational companies got hold of all the

oil. They are extracting as much of the non-renewable resources as possible.

They imposed on Saudi Arabia a production target of 10 million barrels per day, and have prepared it to produce up to 15 million and even more if necessary. It will not be too long before it runs out of gas and oil, and is left with nothing; then, no one knows what that country will live on.

As for Afghanistan, they can neither leave nor stay; the European allies can't stand the situation any longer. Their peoples are demanding an explanation for so many useless deaths.

In Pakistan—a nuclear-weapon country—the situation is particularly difficult. The brutal offenses to their national and religious sentiments seem never to end. And to make matters even worse, it is a nuclear-weapon country.

Events happen regardless of the will of politicians. The least we can do is to help information be readily available.

Since we started I suggested that we make a book with your statements, revised and rectified by yourselves. It is not the same as a manifesto; people hesitate a lot when it comes to signing something, if there is a coma with which they disagree. To publish a book with all of your positions as expressed in this meeting... to let everyone say whatever he or she wishes. This is what I have discussed with Abel.

Somebody posed me that question, asking me about my views. I do not wish to dishearten anybody, but I can say that it is very difficult, really very difficult. There is something I dare say, if you knew that the world is going to last for ten years only, it is your duty to struggle and do something in those ten years.

If somebody tells you, “You can be certain that the planet is going to disappear and this thinking species is going to be extinct,” what would you do? Sit down and cry? I think we must struggle, and that's what we have always done.

And, why do men struggle? They struggle for something. What do they sacrifice their lives for? They sacrifice their lives for something.

I am sure about that, because I know many people who understand those problems when you explain them, and that

is what we can do, that is what I suggest that we do, and not let ourselves be overtaken by pessimism.

I was reminding Frei Betto that, years ago, he had presented me with the first book by Hawking about the big explosion that occurred some 13.7 billion years ago, according to the most eminent scientists. They called it the Big Bang. That is the standard knowledge until a new theory is elaborated. As of late, there's talk about Higgs boson, a particle that would explain the origin of matter.

Scientists are now unsure about whether the universe is expanding or reducing itself. They tell us about stars that emitted their light 10 billion years ago. Nobody knows what happened to them.

As you can see, we know nothing, and the little that we know changes constantly. Nonetheless, studying is something wonderful.

If there's something complicated and you want to spend your free time in a pleasant and useful way, you could read about those issues.

I cannot promise when I will see you again because if I do, I would be bound by that promise. I do not like to make commitments... what if I can't keep my word? So I am not committing myself but, if I am able, I will meet with you again, because I think that in a year from today I will be able to tell you about many things that are unknown to me now.

(Applause).

I apologize for the time that I have taken from you.

Here's a paper they passed up to me, "We've already been at this for eight and a half hours" (Laughter). Well, if you could measure good will by the hours you spend doing something I am more than happy that they be counted; I wish we could spend 10, 12... I would gladly spend them this way. I feel better here, speaking with you, than anywhere else (Applause).

Ok... A big hug to you all. I sent you the book with a card; please, read it when you have the time, and I will read everything that was left with me here.

I'll see you soon.

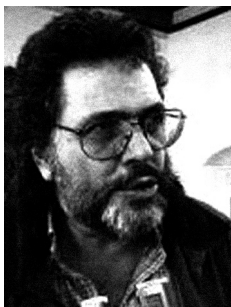
(Ovation)

Personalities that Participated in the Dialogue during the Meeting



Zuleica Romay Guerra (Cuba)

President of the Cuban Book Institute. Recipient of the Casa de las Américas Special Prize 2012 on the black presence in the contemporary Americas and the Caribbean, with her book *Elogio de la altea o las paradojas de la racialidad*.



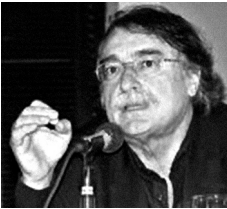
Abel Prieto Jiménez (Cuba)

Writer. Former Minister of Culture (1997–2012). President of UNEAC (Union of Cuban Artists and Writers) (1988–1997). Currently, Advisor of the President of the Council of State and Ministers.



Fidel Castro Ruz (Cuba)

Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution.



Ignacio Ramonet (Spain)

Journalist and writer. Specialist in Geopolitics and International Strategy and UN consultant. One of the promoters of the Porto Alegre World Social Forum. Doctor *Honoris Causa* of the universities of Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Cordoba (Argentina), and Havana (Cuba).



François Houtart (Belgium)

Priest and sociologist. Well-known figure in the anti-globalization movement. He is one of the fathers of the Other Davos and the Porto Alegre World Social Forum. UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-violence 2009. Doctor *Honoris Causa* of the University of Havana.



Stella Calloni (Argentina)

Journalist and writer. José Martí Latin American Journalist Award (1986). Correspondent in South America, Buenos Aires headquarters of *La Jornada* newspaper (Mexico). Her book *Operación Cóndor. Pacto Criminal* is one of the most important denunciations of the dictatorships in the southern cone of Latin America.



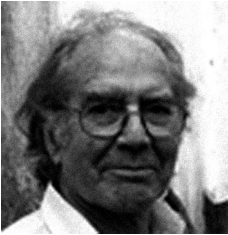
Marília Guimarães (Brazil)

Outstanding social activist and intellectual. Coordinator of the Rio de Janeiro Branch of the Network of Networks In Defense of Humanity.



Harry Grünberg (Germany)

President of the German Network of Solidarity with Cuba.



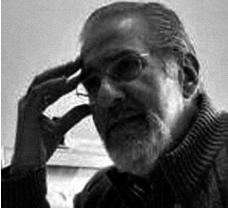
Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (Argentina)

Nobel Peace Prize 1980. President of the Honorary Council of the Latin American Peace and Justice Service Foundation and the International League for Human Rights and Liberation of Peoples, and member of the Permanent People's Tribunal and the Honor Committee of the Decade of Peace and Non-violence International Cordination.



Peter Martin Phillips (U.S.)

Historian and professor. President of the Media Freedom Foundation. One of the leaders of the Project Censored, Sonoma State University, California, that publishes a list with the 25 more censored news by the U.S. corporate media.



Atilio Borón (Argentina)

Researcher and professor at the University of Buenos Aires since 1986. UN International José Martí Award 2009 for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). Recipient of the Honorable Mention in the Ezequiel Martínez Estrada Essay Contest of the Casa de las Américas (2004) for his book *Empire and Imperialism. A Critical Reading of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri*.



Alejandro Carpio (Puerto Rico)

Professor, playwright, novelist, and essayist. Recipient of the Second Prize for the Latin American Novel–Alba Narrative Competition (2011) for *El papel de lija* (Sandpaper).



Daniel Chavarría (Uruguay)

Writer and professor of the University of Havana. National Prize of Literature 2010. Recipient of the following prizes: Dashiell Hammett Award (1992), Planeta (1993), Casa de las Américas (2000), Edgar Allan Poe (2002) and Alejo Carpentier (2004) for some of his works.



Carlo Frabetti (Italia)

Writer, TV scriptwriter, comic critic and mathematician. Author of more than thirty titles related to science, children and youth literature. He has been granted the Jaén de Navarra Juvenil Award for *El gran juego* (1998) (The Big Game).



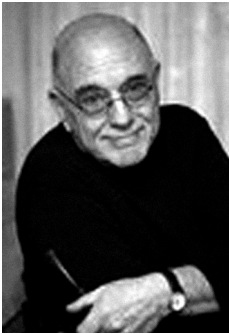
Carlos Francisco Bauer (Argentina)

Philosopher and historian. University professor. In 2011 he received the *Pensar a Contracorriente Award* (Thinking against the Stream Award) for his *La huella de Haití entre el latino-americanocentrismo y la historia universal. Otro camino para descolonizar nuestra historia, cultura y Estado. Notas para un proceso de liberación permanente* (The Mark of Haiti among Latin American Centrist and Universal History. Another Path to De-colonize Our History, Culture, and State. Notes for a permanent liberation process).



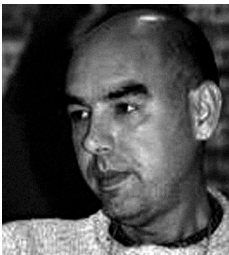
Rosa Maria Cruz e Silva (Angola)

Minister of Culture.



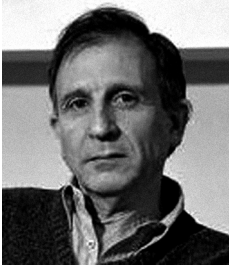
Vicente Battista (Argentina)

Narrator, essayist, and playwright. Permanent collaborator in the culture section of *Clarín* newspaper (Buenos Aires). Received the Casa de las Américas Award for his first book of short stories *Los muertos* (The Dead) and in 1995 the Planeta Award for his novel *Sucesos argentinos* (Argentine Events).



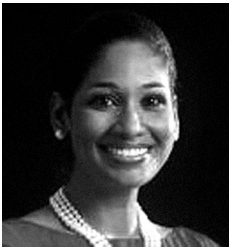
Santiago Alba (Spain)

Writer, essayist, and philosopher. He has published several books of essays on topics dealing with Philosophy, Anthropology, and Politics; he also collaborates as editor on several journals and the media (*Gara*, *Público*, *Archipiélago: Cuadernos de crítica de la cultura*, *LDNM* and *Rebelión*, among others). He lives in Tunisia.



Francisco Sesto (Venezuela)

Minister of State for the reconstruction of Caracas. Architect and poet. Former Minister of the People's Power for Culture.



Lisa Hanna (Jamaica)

Minister of Culture. She has been Member of Parliament during two terms by PNP.



Erika Silva (Ecuador)

Minister of Culture. Sociologist. University professor.



Jorgelina Cerritos (El Salvador)

Actress, poet, and playwright. In 2004, she received the title of Gran Maestre in Children's Theater in her country. For her writing, she received the National Dramaturgy Award in 2007 and 2008, and the Literary Latin American Award from the Casa de las Américas in the theater category in 2011, as well as the Fifth George Woodyard Latin American Theater Prize from the University of Connecticut (U.S.).



Miguel Bonasso (Argentina)

Politician, journalist, and writer. He has collaborated on a regular basis with the newspaper *Página/12* and *Crítica* (Argentina). He received the Rodolfo Walsh Prize for his eye-witness novel *Recuerdo de la muerte* (Remembrance of Death) (1988) and for *Don Alfredo* (1999).



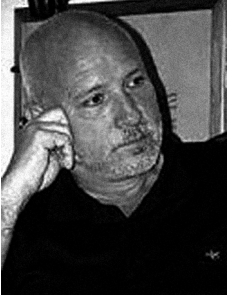
Francisco Romero (Argentina)

Secretary of Culture of the Chaco province.



Katja Klübendorf (Germany)

Member of the left-wing newspaper's staff *Junge Welt*, in solidarity with Cuba. This newspaper is independently organized and it has its bases in the Democratic Republic of Germany.



Esteban Llorach Ramos (Cuba)

Writer and editor, specialist in children's literature. National Editing Prize (2003). Vice-president of the Children's and Youth Literature Section of the Association of Writers of UNEAC. Associated Professor at the Faculty of Communication.



Frei Betto (Brazil)

Dominican friar. Theologist and writer of progressive ideas who has supported Latin American liberation movements. He has written more than 50 books. In 1985 and 2005, he received the Jabuti Award, the most important literary prize in Brazil. Consultant to social movements such as the Base Ecclesiastical Communities and the Rural Landless Workers' Movement. He was Special Advisor of President Lula and Coordinator of the Social Mobilization of Zero Hunger Program (2003–2004).

APPENDIXES

The Network of Networks In Defense of Humanity

The Network of Networks In Defense of Humanity was created in 2003 due to the initiative of outstanding Mexican intellectuals as a demonstration of the spirit of resistance and solidarity against the anti-Cuban campaign, at the launching of the Appeal to the Conscience of the World which was read that same year by Pablo González Casanova at the May-First celebrations in Havana's Revolution Square. It was further consolidated in December 2004 at the World Meeting of Intellectuals and Artists In Defense of Humanity held in Caracas, Venezuela.

The network brings together outstanding writers, artists, academics, lawyers, teachers, economists, religious personalities, students, social movements, alternative media, universities, and other institutions and organizations that make up the National Branches—only in a few cases—or join the solidarity campaigns either directly or through social organizations, institutions and alternative media.

The Network cooperates with other networks and different fronts, campaigns, social movements, and organizations with which it maintains a permanent exchange of ideas and coordinate bilateral or multilateral actions. It also participates as a Network or via its members, be they individuals or organizations,

in social fora and other international events along with other campaigns and networks that pursue similar goals.

Given its broad-based, diverse, and progressive platform, the issues that the network addresses as well as the actions that derive from them cover a broad spectrum, but they always abide by its founding principles.

Principal Objectives (established at its founding meetings)

- To support the struggles of the peoples of the world for their rights. To express solidarity with the processes of social change; to sustain and promote cultural diversity and cultural rights, as well as advocate the defense of the environment.
- To oppose imperialism and its neoliberal policies, socio-cultural uniformity projects and the monopolization of knowledge that ought to be placed at the service of humanity as a whole, and the imperialist wars and terrorism.
- To combat and denounce imperialist aggressions and their causes. To combat hunger, poverty and restrictive access to education, and health afflicting the majority of human beings.
- To combat and denounce all forms of racism and discrimination. To disseminate, promote, and encourage the exercise of autonomy by indigenous peoples and the fundamental rights of peasant organizations, for the purpose of establishing and validating the autonomous powers of communities, resistance and alternative groups from the grassroots.
- To contribute legal and historical arguments to denounce cases of genocide, ethnocide, and crimes against humanity.
- To develop actions and alternative thinking with a view of the world of its own based on the principle that “A Better World Is Possible.”

The Cuban Branch of the Network of Networks In Defense of Humanity

It was founded on February 10, 2004 in the context of the Thirteenth International Book Fair of Havana. It has a Permanent Office in Cuba headed by a National Coordinator. The Ministry of Culture of Cuba supports the work of the Branch.

It pursues specific goals that also entail a commitment towards the revolutionary and progressive movements in today's world. It works to confront and dismantle all kinds of aggressive plans and actions against Cuba, giving priority to the struggle against the unjust blockade imposed by imperialism against the Cuban people.

Together with its peers on the Network and all other progressive movements, it defends all the just causes of the world, including the liberation of the five Cuban anti-terrorist heroes, who are unjustly held in U.S. prisons.

The Cuban Branch of the Network In Defense of Humanity supports and disseminates information about Cuba's international solidarity in the areas of health care and education to the dispossessed of the world, in spite of the devastating effects of the blockade, which shows that there's a real possibility to palliate humanity's problems through a political will in true solidarity.

It also mobilizes public international opinion in the face of slanderous, ill-intended, and dangerous campaigns whether against our country or any other country in the world, that may threaten to violate their right to self-determination and interfere in their internal conflicts.

In order to effectively achieve these goals, the Cuban Branch of the Network intends to pursue the following objectives:

- To guarantee, first and foremost, the Network's work inside the country through various actions and coordinations.
- To promote mobilizations and campaigns through a convergence of actions on the Networks.
- To obtain tangible results with an impact on the media, the public opinion and the policies that uphold the ideas which led to the foundation of the Network.

- To support the development of ALBA as a formula for regional integration to the benefit of peoples as opposed to the divisive manoeuvres by the oligarchies and the hegemonic centers that favor the elites.
- To expand the list of addressees of our Network in Cuba and the world, including outstanding institutions and personalities from different national sectors.
- To reinforce our relations with other national branches and work together with all the branches to create new ones.
- To broaden the relations between the Network and other organizations and different networks in other countries adopting similar positions.
- To ensure that, through communication via the Network and the organization of events, contacts are established among outstanding personalities and opinion leaders to enhance their initiatives and capacity for influence with the aim of favoring the development of an anti-hegemonic thinking and, in general, a critical reflection and a discussion of progressive and revolutionary ideas.

The ultimate objective is to generate and channel messages in the mass and alternative media with the purpose of influencing and mobilizing the public opinion to have a political and social impact that could be more or less direct through the use of new technologies, digital media (Web pages, social networks, bulletins, message services, telephone communication systems, debate-fora, and calls to action in different languages), as well as the celebration of national and international events especially conceived by the Network or as scheduled.

Outstanding Network Actions, from its Inception until the Present

Some important international events:

- Meeting In Defense of Humanity, Mexico, October 24 to 25, 2003. The Network bases were established and the principles that would govern it were made known. The Declaration of Mexico was signed by 89 personalities

from around the world, including Evo Morales, Pablo González Casanova, Alfonso Sastre, François Houtard, Harry Belafonte, and Atilio Borón.

- World Meeting of Intellectuals In Defense of Humanity in Caracas, December 1 to 5, 2004. Official foundation of the Network with the participation of intellectuals and artists representing 52 countries and different cultures, who agreed on the need of building a barrier of resistance against an attempted world's domination.
- International Meeting against Terrorism, for Truth and Justice in Havana, June 2 to 4, 2005. Important actions were approved, among them, the establishment of an Observatory against Terrorism in the hemisphere, the creation of a data base collecting information on this genocidal policy and the drafting and publication of an Encyclopaedia of Terrorism in the hemisphere, including essential concepts and categories, the background of persons who are guilty of acts of genocide and repression and other related terrorists, as well as a chronology of these criminal acts and the characterization of the national and supra-national components of the terrorism machinery. This meeting was chaired by our Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz.
- World Meeting of Intellectuals and Artists In Defense of Humanity, Rome, 2006, October 11 to 14, 2006.
- Seventh International Workshop on Emancipation Paradigms in Havana, April 27 to 30, 2007. Experiences were exchanged among representatives from 38 organizations, movements, and social networks, mainly from Latin America and the U.S.
- Meeting Armed with Ideas, Intellectuals and Artists for Peace, and Sovereignty in Latin America and the Caribbean in Caracas, April 12 to 13, 2008. Chaired by President Hugo Chávez and Cuban Minister of Culture Abel Prieto, attended by 82 intellectuals and artists from several countries.
- Meeting of Intellectuals and Artists of the World for Unity and Sovereignty in Bolivia, La Paz, July 28 to 30, 2008.

National and foreign academics ratified their support to the process of change in Bolivia and signed the Declaration of La Paz.

- Eighth World Meeting of Intellectuals and Artists In Defense of Humanity and General Assembly of the World Forum of Alternatives in Caracas, October 13, 2008.
- International Workshop in Havana Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 60 Years Later, December 10, 2008. This meeting was convened by the Cuban and Venezuelan Branches of the Network of Networks In Defense of Humanity and the National Cuban UNESCO Commission. Intellectuals, artists, journalists, religious personalities, social activists, and parliamentarians, among them Rafael Cancel Miranda and Cindy Sheehan attended.
- Eighth International Workshop on Emancipation Paradigms in Havana, September 3 to 5, 2009.
- Social Forum of the Americas in Asuncion, Paraguay, August 2010.
- Foundation of the Paraguayan Branch of the Network, August 2010.
- Ninth Workshop on Emancipation Paradigms, April 2011.
- Sessions of the Latin American Geopolitical Observatory, Havana, March 2011.
- Meeting-Workshop of the Network Coordinators, Havana, July 28, 29 and 30, 2011.

Calls to Action and Declarations

From its inception, the Network has had important and relevant moments in which calls to action, declarations and statements have been issued in support of all just causes of the world. Many of these were generated and approved at international meetings; others were launched on the Web in the face of the imminent denunciations and condemnations of deplorable acts such as the U.S. aggressive actions against Cuba as a result of the events occurred in 2003, the attempted coup d'état in Venezuela, the attempts to divide Bolivia, the tenth

year of imprisonment of our five Cuban heroes in U.S. jails, the coup d'état in Honduras, the imperialist warmongering policies in Latin America and the Caribbean and, most recently, the attack on the Fleet of Solidarity and Peace in Palestine and the counter-offensive to the media campaign against Cuba. In most of these causes we have managed to maintain a thematic website with the signatures of persons who support the document and the information.

THE CARACAS CALL TO ACTION. WORLD MEETING OF INTELLECTUALS AND ARTISTS IN DEFENSE OF HUMANITY. DECEMBER 2004

Meeting in Caracas, the birthplace of the Liberator Simón Bolívar, intellectuals and artists from fifty-two countries and diverse cultures agreed on the need of building a barrier of resistance against today's attempted world domination.

We live in an era where the UN Charter is not being respected: international law has been violated and principles such as non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the very concept of sovereignty have been abolished. The Geneva Conventions on prisoners of war and the protection of civilian populations have been violated; prisoners of both sexes are being tortured and humiliated and detention camps have been created outside the law in the usurped territory of Guantánamo and in Iraq.

The invasion and devastation of Iraq, the threats against other nations in the Middle East, the martyrdom of the Palestinian people, the interventions by the great powers in Africa, reveal the decision to impose through violence a regime that is based on the use of force.

The purpose of many of these aggressions is to gain control over the reserves of hydrocarbons, minerals, biodiversity, and water of the least developed countries. We support the right of the peoples to preserve the control over these resources and reject expropriating interventions.

The crimes against the Iraqi people demonstrate the extremes to which media and the governments that are self-proclaimed advocates of human rights can go. The city of Fallujah,

now razed to the ground, shall remain as a symbol of heroic resistance in a tragic moment of history. Part of this domination project is the collection of an illegitimate external debt and the attempted economic annexation of Latin America and the Caribbean through the FTAA and other plans and agreements to the detriment of their independence and their real opportunities for development. There is a growing risk of new forms of intervention and aggression in the face of an upsurge of social struggles and processes of change throughout the region. Notions such as “pre-emptive wars” and “change of regime” proclaimed by the official doctrine of the government of the United States are raising up to threaten any country that does not bow to imperial interests or has some strategic importance. One example is the recent intervention in Haiti.

Today, more than ever before, it is necessary to mobilize solidarity with Venezuela, Cuba, and all popular causes in the continent.

We also express our solidarity with the peoples of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, and all those resisting imperialist occupation and aggression.

A crucial component of the global struggle in the face of imperialist adventures, alongside with those forces in Europe, Latin America, and other parts of the world that are against war, is undoubtedly the mobilization of the most politically conscious sectors of the U.S. people.

We condemn terrorism, but we oppose the political manipulation of the so-called “war on terrorism” and the fraudulent appropriation of values and concepts such as democracy, freedom, and human rights. We refuse any attempt to label the peoples’ resistance struggles, the combat against terrorism and the aggressions by the oppressors as “terrorism.”

While inestimable resources are being squandered by the military industry, another silent and devastating extermination takes place on a daily basis because of hunger, social problems, extreme poverty, curable diseases, and epidemics. The suffering besetting the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, as the result of policies promoted by international financial institutions, is being ignored by those who

would like to dominate the world and by the global elite profiting from neocolonial pillage. The absence of programs aimed at the true solution of these problems is yet another sign of the dehumanization that characterizes our times.

We embrace the struggles of workers, peasants, the jobless, the disadvantaged, the exploited, the excluded, women, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, migrants, sexual minorities, abandoned children, and the victims of the sex trade. We support and commit ourselves to vindications of those who defend their rights and their identities in the face of the totalitarian and homogenizing ambitions of neoliberal globalization.

The majority of humanity, lacking a basic nutritional, medical care, electricity, housing, and potable water, is being sacrificed by a system that depletes natural resources, destroys the environment and endangers the very survival of life with its irrational consumer waste. The great majorities have very limited access to education and they are excluded from the benefits they receive from the use of the new information technologies and the manufacture of generic medicines. The dominant economic system generates the marketing of most of the intellectual production by privatizing it and transforming it into an instrument to perpetuate the concentration of wealth and the domestication of consciences. There is an urgent need to prevent that the WTO policy to transform the world into merchandise could destroy cultural diversity.

The concentration of the property over the mass media turns freedom of information into a fallacy. Media power, at the beck and call of the hegemonic project, distorts reality, manipulates history, encourages discrimination in all its different guises, and promotes resignation to the current status quo by portraying it as the only possibility.

We have to step up to the offensive with concrete actions. The first of these, adopted at this meeting, consists of creating an information network of networks of information, cultural and artistic actions, solidarity, coordination and mobilization associating intellectuals and artists with social fora and popular struggles, thus guaranteeing the continuity of these efforts

and their transformation into an international movement, In Defense of Humanity.

It is fundamental for us to counter the propaganda of the hegemonic centers by circulating emancipation ideas through all possible routes: radio and TV stations, the Internet, alternative press, cinema, community media, and others, and disseminate information about development projects and the experiences for popular participation and education so that they may become a benchmark in the reconstruction of the utopias that prompts history.

The Venezuelan reality demonstrates that popular mobilization is capable of conquering and preserving power for the people and promoting and defending great transformations to its advantage. Our gratitude goes to the Bolivarian government, the people of Venezuela and its President Hugo Chávez for their commitment with the future of this international movement.

At these particularly dangerous times, we renew our conviction that another world is not only possible, but indispensable, and we commit ourselves and call to the struggle to achieve it with more solidarity, unity and determination. In Defense of Humanity, we reaffirm our certainty that peoples shall have the last say.

Thematic Issues

As a result of the meeting in Caracas, the Network of Networks In Defense of Humanity is working on ten thematic issues:

1. In defense of our planet for all
2. In defense of the integration of peoples
3. In defense of an emancipating solidarity economy
4. In defense of sovereignty and international law
5. In defense of unity in diversity and culture for all
6. In defense of knowledge for all
7. In defense of popular participation
8. In defense of veracity and plurality of information
9. In defense of memory
10. In defense of peace

The Common Good of Humanity, Paradigm of Socialism and the Unifying Concept for Social Struggles

FRANÇOIS HOUTART

The general panorama for the situation on the planet and humanity in the long term is disturbing. We are not just dealing with a financial crisis that may find mid-term solutions within the logic of capitalism. Thus, a combination of neoliberal measures and a toughening of class struggle, by the dominant sector, would permit making the subaltern and middle classes pay for the crisis. Therefore, capitalism could triumph, showing its faculty for surpassing the crisis in the mid-term, laughing at the protests of workers and the “Indignants.” On the other hand, it is probable that if the recommendations of the Stiglitz¹ Commission on the world financial and monetary crisis were to be accepted, the worsening of the 2011 situation would not have taken place.

Nevertheless, various analyses of the evolution of the world economy point towards a progressive erosion of the capitalist development model. They affirm that capitalism has finished its historic role in the development of productive forces, building such contradictions that it leads towards an “announced death” (Samir Amin, Jorge Berstein, Immanuel Wallerstein, and others).

1. *The Stiglitz Report*, The New Press, New York/London, 2010.

The reflection demands us to take into account the ensemble of reality, with a holistic view, contrary to the vision of capitalism that concentrated on accumulation. According to Karl Polanyi, capitalism detached the economy from society in order to subsequently impose its own logic of value, in other words, goods as a universal perspective. Only reintegration of the economy into society will be able to resolve the contradictions. That requires an ensemble vision, both for reasons of theoretical coherence and for convergence of the struggles.

At the present time, a factor intervening in a central manner is the relationship with nature; this was the favored topic during the meeting of the Commander Fidel Castro with intellectuals invited to the 2012 Book Fair in Havana. Being aware of the fact that the Earth is not an inexhaustible resource, especially in energy matters, more precise knowledge of the irreversible harm to ecosystems due to industrial activity, types of agriculture and irrational consumption, constitute new factors that question the model of human development prevailing throughout the last 500 years. It is also what was expressed by Bolívar Echeverría, speaking about “the illusions of modernity.”²

Regulations versus Alternatives

Dealing with this situation, it seems more and more clear that regulations are not enough. It is the logic of the system that is in question. Without doubt, an apocalyptic speech does nothing for action. It is the rigor of the analysis that can guide the future and create a sense of the urgency for radical solutions. The multiple aspects of the crisis come together and all of them finally have their origin in the logic of capitalism.

Many regulations were proposed at international level, such as that of the United Nations, but the system has no capacity to accept them. Much less it can accept alternatives. The Stiglitz Commission presented a reform of international financial agencies (World Bank, IMF) and the WTO and the forma-

2. Bolívar Echeverría, *Las ilusiones de la modernidad* (Quito: Editorial Tramasocial, 2001).

tion of a permanent Group of Experts to prevent crisis (the only measure accepted by the United Nations Conference). It also recommended the creation of a Global Economic Coordination Council at par with the Security Council (but functioning democratically); the organization of a global reserve system to go against the hegemony of the dollar as a currency of reference; the institution of international taxation; the abolition of tax havens and the banking secrecy, and finally reform of the certification agencies.

On the contrary, the WTO and the European Union, as many countries following capitalist logic, continued promoting pro-cyclic measures (decreasing social policies, for example), accentuating the economic disaster. That is the result of “monopoly generalization capitalism,” as Samir Amin³ writes, imposing its political solutions. In the South, extractive activities and single-crops with land hoarding speed up, accompanied by criminalization of protests. It is seen in the entire Latin American continent (even in progressive countries)⁴ but also in Africa and Asia.

Confronting the climatic crisis, the UN organized several conferences: Rio de Janeiro, Kyoto, Copenhagen, Cancun, Durban, not to mention specific conferences on the oceans, biodiversity, etc. Precise measures were proposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and decrease environmental destruction. The industrialized nations halted the decisions or rejected all kinds of international commitment (the USA in particular). Nevertheless, in this sector as well, acceptable regulations have their limits: they have to be “market friendly.”

The food crisis, as Jean Ziegler⁵ puts it, is the fruit of the logic of the economic system. In a world that has never before produced such wealth, one cannot find the necessary political will to apply efficient measures. Quite the contrary; the United States, for example, with less agricultural surplus-production,

3. Samir Amin, “Audacia, más audacia,” FMA website, 2011.

4. “État des résistances dans le Sud: Amérique Latine,” *Alternatives Sud*, Vol. 8 (2011), no. 4.

5. Jean Ziegler, *Destruction massive. Géopolitique de la faim* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2011).

is diminishing its aid to the UN Food Program (WFP). Integrating agriculture into monopolistic capitalism logic requires a growing concentration of land, the development of single-crops, the disappearance of family farms and it accentuates the food problem in the long term.

The social crisis due to the growth of inequalities asks for structural reforms—agrarian, financial, political—as solutions that go further than the possibility of bourgeoisie acceptance. The system they dominate is so dogmatic that it tolerates only light, provisional regulations: programs for the fight against poverty to reduce social pressure, ecological measures when environmental destruction affects the profit rate (green capitalism). The dominant classes are convinced that with light regulations, growth will have its strength restored; evidently growth in the form of a champagne glass, as the graph for the distribution of wealth in the world reveals, carried out by the UNDP, showing its growing concentration in the highest categories.

A New Paradigm for the Collective Life of Humanity on the Planet

But, meanwhile, there is a price to pay. This could be so high as to be socially and ecologically untenable. That is why, in a long term historical view, we are proposing the need for alternatives. In other words, a new paradigm for human development must be defined. Today's situation affects the basics of life on the planet and in particular human life; these are (1) the responsibility of the human genus in dealing with survival on Earth, (2) the manner of producing material basics for life, (3) collective social and political organization, and (4) reading reality and its social building ethics (culture). To redefine a new paradigm passes through review of these four elements in order to create the conditions for the Common Good of Humanity, or, production and reproduction of life.

1. REDEFINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATURE: FROM EXPLOITATION TO RESPECT AS A SOURCE FOR LIFE

Modern civilization with its important control over nature, its high degree of urbanization has made human beings forget

that at the end, they totally depend on nature to live. Climate change reminds them, often with great brutality, about this reality. Thus, it is a matter of defining the relationship, not as exploitation of the earth while being a source of natural resources capable of being reduced to the status of merchandise, but as the source of all life, in an attitude of respect for its capacity for physical and biological regeneration. That evidently signifies a radical philosophical change. It is a question of criticizing the purely utilitarian nature of the relationship that in capitalism comes to consider ecological damage as collateral damage (eventually to reduce as much as possible), but inevitable, or even worse, as “external elements” because they do not enter into the market calculations and, consequently, in the accumulation of capital. In any case, the principle to defend is the possibility for the planet to be sustainable, meaning, conserving the integrity of its biodiversity and the ability to renew itself in the face of human activities.

Among the indigenous peoples of the American continent, the concept of Mother Earth (Pacha Mama) is a central one. Nowadays several of the traditional concepts are being used again (*Sumak kawsay*) as instruments of historical memory, cultural reconstruction, and affirmation of identity. But also these notions can be useful for the criticism of the logic of capitalism. In this way, they can acquire a meaning that transcends traditional cosmovision and has universal value.

Previously we referred to the contribution of Karl Marx. For him, capitalism provoked an artificial and mechanical separation between nature and human beings. The break of balance in the metabolism, or the material exchange between the earth and the satisfaction of the needs of human beings, just as it was defined by the process of accumulation of capital, opened up onto irrational schedules, pillage, and destruction (60 per cent of human production goes over oceans). For that reason, we must reduce the energy-natural flows, in a socially fair manner, in order to increase the quality of life. According to Marx, only socialism could re-establish the balance of the metabolism and put an end to the devastation of nature. In all truth, socialist

regimes were not particularly sensitive to that aspect of Marxist thought.

The affirmation of a new conception of relations with nature brings with it many practical consequences. One first application consists of not accepting private ownership of what is termed “natural resources”; by this we mean the minerals, fossil energies, the forests. It is a matter of the common heritage of humanity that cannot be taken over by individuals and corporations, following the logic of the economy of the capitalist market, or, on behalf of private interests ignoring the external elements and oriented by the maximization of profit. Within this same view, the demands for introducing ecological costs on all human activity in economic calculations would allow for their reduction and go against the instrumental rationality excluding the external elements, one of the bases for the destructive nature of capitalism.

Another aspect is the rejection of the merchandising of the elements necessary for the reproduction of life, such as water and seeds. They are common goods that must come out of the logic of merchandise and enter into a view taking in common management according to various types that do not necessarily imply state ownership but collective control. In a still more concrete fashion, this principle would imply putting an end to single crops that the future inhabited regions are preparing. Taxing the kilometers travelled by industrial or agricultural products would permit both reduced energy use and pollution of the seas.

The reserves of biodiversity would have to be extended to more territories. The promotion of organic agriculture would be a part of this project, just as the improvement of peasant agriculture, more efficient in the long term than capitalist productivist agriculture. Promotion of international covenants is another very important sector. We could mention as examples the agreements on climate (Kyoto, Bali, Cancun, Durban) in spite of their relative failures, on biodiversity (Bonn and Nagoya), on the protection of water (rivers and oceans), on fishing, on waste (especially nuclear waste), and several others. The degree of sensitivity to this dimension would be on the

basis of international efficiency of the progressive states and might show up on the agenda of their foreign policies.

2. RE-DIRECT PRODUCTION OF THE BASES FOR LIFE, FAVORING THE USAGE VALUE OVER THE EXCHANGE VALUE

The paradigm transformation in its relationship with the economy consists of favoring the usage value instead of the exchange value as capitalism does. We speak of usage value when goods or a service acquire usefulness to satisfy the needs of life of an individual or a group. They acquire an exchange value when it is the object of a transaction. The characteristic of a mercantile economy is to favor the exchange value. For capitalism, the most developed form of mercantile production, the latter is the only “value.” Goods or a service that is not converted into merchandise has no value because it does not contribute to the accumulation of capital, the goal and motor of the economy (M. Godelier, 1982). In this view, the usage value is secondary and, as István Meszáros writes, “it can acquire the right to exist if it adjusts to the imperatives of the exchange value.”⁶ Goods can still be produced with no usefulness as long as they are paid for (the explosion in military expenses, for example, or the white elephants of international cooperation). Artificial needs are created (by advertising); financial services are broadened in speculative bubbles. On the contrary, putting the accent on usage value makes the market a server of the system of human needs/capacities.

In fact, the concept of needs is relative. It changes with the historical circumstances and the development of productive forces. That is why Marx spoke of capacities, or, the possibility of complying with satisfaction. The principle is that all human beings have the right to satisfy their vital needs. It is what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphatically states. However, that is not realized in the abstract sense, but in economic, social, and political circumstances that are well determined. Relativity cannot signify unfair inequalities,

6. I. Meszáros, *El desafío y la carga del tiempo histórico. El Socialismo del Siglo XXI* (Buenos Aires/Caracas: CLACSO, Vadell, 2008), p. 48.

some having more needs than others because of their class situation, gender, or ethnicity. Satisfaction of basic needs has to be defined by the community on different levels, within a democratic process and by competent bodies (national and international parliaments, representative assemblies). It is what could be called the establishing of a “moral economy”, or submitted to ethical imperatives that contradict the predominance of the exchange value while source of accumulation of capital and the objective of the economy.

That is not possible without questioning the private ownership of the principal means of production, something that precisely permits the exercise of power of decision in favor of the holders of the goods of capital and a subordination of the work to the capital, in a real way (directly by salaries) or formal (indirectly by other mechanisms such as monetary policies, State deficits and debts, speculation on the prices of food and energy, privatizations of public services, etc.).⁷ It is the exclusive control of capital over the process of production that is also the origin of the degradation of work itself and the non-evaluation of the work of women, essential, of course, in the reproduction of life in all its dimensions. In truth, complete state-ownership as counter-point to total market is not a satisfactory solution, as the socialist experiences of the past have proved. There exists a multitude of forms of group control, from cooperatives to citizen associations.

And there we have a totally different definition of the economy. No longer are we dealing with producing an aggregate value in benefit of the owners of the goods of production or financial capital, but of the collective activity destined to assure the bases for physical, cultural, and spiritual life for all human beings on the planet. We cannot accept a world and national economy based on the exploitation of work to maximize the rate of profits, or of production, of goods and ser-

7. It is estimated that 70 per cent of work in the world is informal; this makes it difficult to organize workers. However, at the present time several test cases exist such as in Nicaragua, the Confederation of Self-Employed Workers (CTCP-FNT), affiliated to the National Workers' Federation of Nicaragua (FNT) and Streetnet International (Orlando Núñez, 2011).

vices destined for 20 per cent of the world's population that has considerably high purchase power, leaving the rest excluded from the sharing because they do not produce an aggregate value and do not have sufficient income. Redefining the economy this way signifies a fundamental change. Evidently favoring the usage value implies development of the productive forces and it must be carried out according to the first basis, the respect for nature and also with the other two we shall be subsequently covering: generalized democracy and inter-culturalism. Exchanges are not excluded, necessary also to satisfy new usage values, but on the condition of not creating inequalities in local access to usage value and of including the external elements in the process.

Favoring the usage value over the exchange value also signifies rediscovering the territory. Globalization made us forget proximity in order to favor global exchanges, ignoring the external elements and giving priority to financial capital, the most globalized of the elements of the economy because of its virtual character. Territory as the space for economical activity but also for political responsibility and cultural exchange is the place for another rationality. In the view of capitalism, the law of value imposes the priority of mercantilization and therefore the cultures of exportation, for example, on the production of food for local consumption is favored.

That takes us to concrete measures; they are many and we shall only give a few examples. From a negative point of view, we cannot accept the priority of financial capital in all its varieties, as banking secrecy, two powerful instruments in the class struggle. Also establishing a tax on international financial flows (Tobin Tax) could reduce the power of financial capital. The "hateful debts" must be denounced after audits, as it was done in Ecuador. We cannot admit speculation on food and energy. Prolonging "life expectancy" of industrialized products would permit great savings of raw materials and energy, diminishing the artificial profit of capital only because of the speed of its turn-over.

Social economy, as we know, is built on other logical bases than those of capitalism. In truth, it is still marginal when

facing the immense concentration of oligopolistic capital, but it is possible to provide incentives for several of its forms. Restoration of common goods privatized by neoliberalism is also a fundamental route for new social building, in many domains: public services such as water, energy, transportation, communication, health, education, culture—everything now entering into the “system of needs/capacities.”

3. REORGANIZING COLLECTIVE LIFE BY THE GENERALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY IN SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONS

A third central theme in the review of the foundations of collective life, for the new paradigm of the Common Good of Humanity, is constituted by generalization of democracy, not just applied to the political sector, but also to the economic system, in relationships between men and women, and in all institutions. In other words, formal democracy, often used as a way to establish artificial equality, thus reproducing unrecognized social inequalities, must transform into the political formulation of solidarity. That implies, in particular, reviewing the concept of the State and the recovery of human rights in all their dimensions, both individual and collective. It is a question of making every human being, with no distinction as to race, sex, or class, a subject of social building and so to re-evaluate subjectivity.⁸

Generalization of democracy is valid as well for the dialogue between political and social movement applications. Organization of applications of consultation and dialogue belongs to the same conception, respecting mutual autonomy. The project of a council of social movements in the general architecture of ALBA is an original attempt in this direction. The concept of civil society frequently used for this purpose continues to be ambiguous because it is also the location for class struggles: in reality there is a lower civil society and a higher civil society and unqualified utilization of the term often permits confusion to be created and to present social solu-

8. F. Hinkelammert, *El sujeto y la ley. El retorno del sujeto* (Caracas: Ministry of Culture, 2005).

tions ignoring the class differences.⁹ On the other hand, forms of participative democracy, like those found in several Latin American countries, also enter into the same logic of generalized democracy.

Other institutions relate to the same principle. Nothing is less democratic than the capitalist economic system, with its concentration of decision-making power in just a few hands. The same is true for the social media and is also applied to all the social, trade union, cultural, sports, and religious institutions.

The destruction of democracy by capitalism, especially in its neoliberal phase, has been such that societies, on all levels, are organizing for the advantages of a minority, provoking a degree of inequality in the world that has never been seen before in the history of the world. Re-establishing democratic functioning as a universal paradigm therefore constitutes a pillar of the Common Good of Humanity.

4. TO ESTABLISH INTER-CULTURALISM INTO BUILDING THE UNIVERSAL COMMON GOOD

Giving everybody the knowledge, all cultures, philosophies, religions, the possibility of contributing to the Common Good of Humanity is the aim of the review of this cultural foundation. That cannot be the exclusive role of the western culture, which is in reality identified today with the concept of development, eliminating or marginalizing all other views. One has to de-colonize the imaginary.¹⁰ That implies the reading of the reality, its interpretation or its anticipation as the necessary ethic for the drawing up of the Common Good of Humanity, the affective dimension necessary for the self-implication of the actors, and the aesthetic and practical expressions.

However, multiculturalism is not enough. We are dealing with the promotion of open interculturalism, or cultures in

9. In a poor neighborhood of Bogota, a few years ago, there appeared a slogan on a wall saying “We too have Human Rights.”

10. See Raúl Fornet, *La philosophie interculturelle* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2011).

dialogue, with possible exchanges. Cultures are not objects in a museum, but the living elements of a society.

Culture includes a spiritual dimension, a distinctly human quality that takes it beyond daily existence. This is a leitmotif in a time of crisis for civilization. In the entire world there exists a search for meaning coming out of the need of redefining the very goals of life. Spirituality is a force that transcends matter and gives it meaning. The sources of spirituality are numerous and are always found within a social context and they cannot exist without a physical and biological base. The human being is one: their spirituality presupposes matter, and their materialism has no meaning without the spirit. A culturalist view of spirituality ignoring the materialism of the human being, in other words, the body for the individual and the economic-political reality for society, is a conceptual detour, taking us to reductionism (culture as the sole factor for change) or to alienation (ignorance of social structures).

The Common Good of Humanity as Global Objective

Of everything we have just stated, we conclude that the Common Good of Humanity is the fruit of a suitable realization of the ensemble of the four basic central themes of collective life of human beings on the planet (which essentially are four social relationships). Just as they are defined by capitalism, guaranteed by the political forces and transmitted by the dominant culture, they are not sustainable and therefore they cannot ensure the Common Good of Humanity. On the other side of the coin, its applications contradict the reproduction of life. The concept of the Common Good of Humanity is a dynamic notion, because its contents must be permanently redefined.

One might object that is a utopia. Besides the fact that human beings need utopias and that capitalism has destroyed utopian thinking, announcing the end of history (there are no alternatives), one can state that the search for the Common Good of Humanity is really a utopia, not in the sense of an illusion, but in that it does not exist today, but it could

exist tomorrow. At the same time, utopias also conserve their dynamic dimension: there will always be a tomorrow. Every political regime or religious movement identifying itself with utopia ends in catastrophe. We are dealing with a call to walk.¹¹ In this sense, we are not dealing with “an inoffensive utopia.” This may be proven by the hundreds of thousands of social movements, citizen organizations, political groups, each in their specific location, struggling for improved relations with nature and for its protection, for peasant and organic agriculture, for social economy, abolition of illegal debts, collective appropriation of production means, primacy of work over capital, defense of human rights, for participative democracy and for giving value to cultures. The World Social Forums allow us to visualize this reality, and this gradually creates new global social awareness.

Nevertheless, it is a dynamic process that requires a coherent ensemble vision as the basis for convergence in action, with the goal of building a force capable of reverting the contemporary dominant system both in its economic dimensions as well as in its social, cultural, and political dimensions. It is precisely what the concept of “Common Good of Humanity” wants to express: theoretical coherence bringing together the four central themes of collective life on the planet and one vision that allows each of the social and political movements and initiatives to locate themselves within the ensemble.

Evidently, opting for alternatives to the current system and proposing a new paradigm for human development does not prevent adopting measures to resolve immediate problems, problems that are the products of capitalist logic. Thus, it was Rosa Luxemburg who proposed a dialectic vision of the relationship between reforms and revolution. So, one cannot underestimate the social policies that try to remedy the effects

11. Eduardo Galeano writes on this subject, “I take two steps closer, it takes two steps away. I move forward 10 steps and the horizon escapes 10 more steps into the distance. I might always go on advancing and I shall never reach it. So what good is utopia? Precisely that: to walk.” (Maurice Lemoine: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 2010).

of neoliberalism. To find both a theoretical and a practical solution, one must deal again with the matter of transition.

Transition

As we know, Karl Marx applied the concept of transition to the passage between feudalism and capitalism, demonstrating how, little by little, the forms of the former were incapable of ensuring conditions for social survival and its progress and how new forms were born until they transformed the body of production methods and social formation. Nowadays the situation is different because if capitalism has developed new contradictions and if some forms of socialism appear, the process must be planned in order to accelerate it. We have no time for gradual evolution. Transition must be organized, taking into account the relationships of existing powers and the state of the production forces, but not just as a process, as a struggle.

For that reason, the basic matter is the definition of the goal: we are dealing with a transition towards a new paradigm to carry out the Common Good of Humanity, or production, reproduction and improvement of life. That fundamentally contradicts the goal of capitalism, not only in economic matters (universality of the law of value) but also in politics (the State at the service of the market) and in culture (consumer individualism). Transition is necessarily a process that takes its time. Not only that, capital as the monopolistic economic power is capable of inciting war (even to nuclear threats) of sacrificing millions of persons by hunger and of corrupting the political forces throughout the world to ensure its predominance, but its logic has penetrated culture, even that of the lower classes and workers' organizations and that ensures the exercise of true hegemony.

To continue reflecting on transition, it is important to analyze the processes taking place right now. In fact, the measures that today are called "transitional" are thought of in two different ways: either as steps towards a new paradigm or as an adaptation of the existing system to new ecological and social demands. It is not the vocabulary we use that makes the differ-

ence between the two trends; it is real policies that make the difference. In the two cases, we can use concepts of transition to socialism, Twenty-first Century Socialism, the Socialism of Buen Vivir (the art of living well), even revolution, but having different contents in the political plan.

What is being experienced in Latin America, with the progressive regimes, clearly states the problem, with differences depending upon the cases. There are countries opting for a clearly social democratic solution, where capitalism is the tool for economic growth, including national and international financial capitalism and where social justice is translated by social redistribution programs, often important and effective ones, of part of the capital gain (Brazil, Argentina, Nicaragua).

Others, with more radical language, also have important social programs, dedicating to them up to 15 or 17 per cent of the national budgets; they increase tax collection but do not seek a new paradigm for development. Through conviction or by force, they seek an extractive model to create wealth, technological and financial dependence on multinational corporations, favoring single-crops, especially to produce agro-fuels, following policies advantageous for social groups having the backing of the banks and internal and external business ventures. Pragmatism guides many decisions. Perhaps, as Vice President Álvaro García Linera of Bolivia used to say, because capitalism still has at least 100 years of life left.

In fact, a post-neoliberal adaptation of capitalism is approaching, facing new demands through a reconstructed State and with several degrees of popular participation (Ecuador, Bolivia, and in part, Venezuela). Compared to the past or to purely pro-capitalist countries (Mexico, Chile, Colombia) we can see highly appreciable progress and facing the options of the rights and the threats of the empire, we cannot make any mistakes in our political positions.

All that we have achieved, partly thanks to the international economic situation (prices for natural resources, a situation which of course strengthens the continent's place in the international division of labor) and partly due to audacious social and cultural policies, cannot be denied. Millions of people

are being helped to exit from poverty, and that is a positive result because the hungry do not suffer or die in the mid or long term; they are dying today. Nevertheless, that does not necessarily mean adopting a new paradigm. Those kinds of policies can be registered within the logic of capitalism, like anti-cyclic neo-Keynesian actions. That kind of reality was acknowledged by Ecuadorean leaders at the end of the first five-year period of the “Citizen Revolution,” “We have not achieved profound changes in the model of accumulation and the structure of ownership.”¹²

Another view is to associate social policies with effective post-capitalist structural transformations: agrarian reform, respect for nature, popular participation, and participative democracy; recovery of sovereignty of natural resources, support for family farms, popular control of the main production means, food sovereignty, effective acknowledgement of indigenous cultures and identities, regionalization of the economies, etc. In this case, transition takes on another meaning.

It is obvious that Venezuela cannot be asked to immediately close down its oil wells, even though we know that this activity contributes to the production of more greenhouse effect gases; nor can we ask Indonesia to destroy all the palm plantations tomorrow; nor Bolivia to close its mines; nor Ecuador to think that developing mining activity could defray the prompt decrease in oil production as a source for the social policies.

But what we should demand is the definition of transition, including an economy based on the usage value and not the exchange value, radical measures to protect nature, even prohibiting extractive activities in certain regions (the basic Yasuní philosophy is moving in that direction), respect for the rights of local communities, notably the indigenous communities and a constructive dialogue with them. The complementing of such policies will be the acceleration of continental regionalisation to build stronger alliances to deal with multi-

12. Presentation of the report on the five-year period by Fander Falconí, Quito, January 19, 2012.

nationals, today ties to a system that is always more integrated and which laughs at national laws, never complying with commitments and imposing their logic on governments incapable of reacting correctly.

The experience in the Philippines during the last 10 years is conclusive: despite a mining law, ecological destruction has been horrifying; entire communities were driven from their territories, the numbers of jobs promised were not respected and in the first 8 years, the State recovered only 11 per cent of the royalties it should have received during the decade.¹³

Several of these elements are present in the new Latin American constitutions and in some real policies that, according to Samir Amin can be considered as “revolutionary advances,” but up to now we cannot see a true change of paradigm. But, in a certain way, one can wonder if for the progressive countries on the continent, the first in the world where there were new anti-neoliberal directions, there existed another view, subjectively and objectively.

In fact, the definition of development has not changed much and it is summarized in the growth of productive forces, production, and consumption, with traditional measures. Many of the political actors have not left the culture of capitalist development, even when they would like to fight against its most negative effects and even though they make up social and cultural views of considerable sizes. In reality, they share the idea that productive forces cannot be developed without going through the logic of the capitalist market. That is also what leaders of the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist parties are also thinking, with a very special theory of the transition towards socialism. In several parts of the world, from Indonesia to Sri Lanka, from Angola to Mozambique, experiences with a socialist bent finished by adopting neoliberalism, probably to a great extent under the international force of the system. The socialist countries of Europe lost the “Cold War” and adopted

13. Alyansa Tigil Mina, *A Legacy of Disasters. The Mining Situation in the Philippines*, 2011.

the worst form of development of the capitalist model: rapid but with inequalities.

At first glance, the Cuban experience seems to substantiate those who are doubting socialism, since a rigid Soviet-type system adopted and imposed at the end of the 1960s did not allow full socialist development of the material bases for life. Truly revolutionary social and cultural achievements were attained, solid enough to resist the test of time, but not sustainable in the long term without the parallel development of production forces with the participation of the workers, as Che had envisioned.¹⁴ To correct this situation, as the measures for change adopted in 2011 indicate, it not an easy task: it deals not only with the economic order but also with political and cultural orders. Nevertheless, the partial difficulties of one experience are clearly not sufficient argument to continue adopting a model that is always more destructive of the planet and the lives of a large part of humanity. The originality of the Cuban situation is that changes are coming from abroad.

Proof of the existence of the possibility to carry out another form of human development is evidently the main task of a socialist project. The new paradigm for the collective life of humanity on the planet, made concrete in the guidelines of its fundamental elements, seems to be the suitable path. We are not dealing with an illusion because there are many successful partial trials and many struggles to broaden them. In several social movements, like those within the progressive Latin American governments, there are persons and groups struggling so that this new paradigm should be the goal.

The culture of economic growth and the absence of a sufficiently clear socialist view of the development of productive forces were the first two obstacles for transitions of the progressive countries of Latin America, towards a new paradigm. But there is a third element: the relationship of strength between these countries and the monopolistic capitalism which is always more concentrated in the multinational corpora-

14. Carlos Tablada, *El marxismo del Che y el socialismo del siglo XXI* (Panama: Ruth Casa Editorial, 2007).

tions. These multinationals possess technical superiority and considerable financial power. They have legal instruments that are capable of imposing themselves without any consideration for local laws. The support their respective political centers receive, especially in the United States and the European Union, and the dominant logic of international organizations such as the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, place these States, especially the small ones, in a situation of inferiority. Only a process of regional integration will allow for a real counterweight to be constituted.

However, in Latin America, there is an initiative that steps beyond the logic of capital: ALBA. Its principles: complementarity, solidarity, and non-competition, applied to concrete social economic relations. Even though it is limited to less than 10 countries, it is of prime importance because it is registered in the logic of the new paradigm. The potential role of the social movements, recognized as an integral part of the process, can help following through, in the fundamental direction. It is on a regional scale that progress towards a new paradigm has its best chance of being carried out and ALBA has this potential.

The other initiatives for integration on the sub-continent, promoted by the progressive regimes, even though they do not share the ALBA philosophy, are taking a notable step towards “disconnecting,” according to the concept of Samir Amin. Whether it is Mercosur, the sucre as currency for exchanges, UNASUR as the coordinating body for South America and, recently, CELAC—which joins Central America and the Caribbean without the presence of the U.S. and Canada—; all these efforts manifest the desire to disassociate from the economic and political influence of the North. It is not an exit from the logic of the capitalist market, but it is an important step towards a break in monopolistic concentration and in this way we are dealing with a phase that could signify transition towards a new model.

Similar ideas exist in Asia (Shanghai Group, Chieng Mai initiative) and in Africa, indicating a new dynamic. Nevertheless, these shall only be a fundamental step if they open up onto a new paradigm; that will not be done without new awareness,

fortunately accentuated by the crisis, organized and sustained social struggles and daring political initiatives. Those are the conditions for the survival of Mother Earth and Humanity.

For these realities and future outlooks, we are proposing the preparation of a Universal Declaration of the Common Good of Humanity parallel to the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, taking up again the principles of a new paradigm capable of guiding the post-capitalist era. It would serve as a collective memory for a change of paradigm, not as a false consensus among opposites, but the instrument for struggle and the source of hope for the future.