

The Marxist

Vol. XIV, No. 3,

July-September 1998

Socialism: A Viable Option

Inaugural speech by Jose Ramon Balaguer Cabrera, Member, and Politburo of the Communist Party of the Cuba at the International Workshop: "Socialism towards the XXI Century". Held at Havana on October 21-23, 1997 to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the martyrdom of Che Guevara.

1. Contemporary Capitalist Society

Once again the bells announcing the victorious finale of capitalism are tolling this time in the name of the superiority of 'globalisation', a term in vogue to explain and justify a whole lot of things. In academic discourse as also in the documents of governmental and international organisations, this intricate and multifaceted process, having its basis in the globalisation of world economy is being acknowledged.

With the idea of future "global village", which brings memory the positions of super-imperialism prevalent in the beginning of the century, a new world economy-brought about by the end of the Cold War-is being spoken about wherein an ambience of permanent harmony that the Nation States are almost dissolved, national sovereignty has lost its meaning by virtue of certain universal tendencies which have made the functioning of the system uniform.

It is true that there has been an enormous growth of world trade, of international mobility of capital and especially of financial flow at a greater rate than that of production. Also it isn't necessary to reiterate that there is a greater degree of inter-penetration in national economies owing to the revolution in the means of transport and communication and transmission of information, further integrated by a global network and woven by a capital with greater international mobility in comparison to the last century.

After all, Marxism had warned us long ago that the structure of international economic relations is the objective process of

capitalism. The international flow of capital-one of its definitive feature-facilitated the establishment of a world system as one of the aspects of capitalist domination-the first of its kind in the history of mankind. This very international mobility assisted by the colossal scientific and technological advancements has resulted in an extremely high level of internationalisation of capital.

But perhaps, as it is insistently proposed, does globalisation signify the universal and definitive triumph of capitalist or the abolition of contradictions between social classes or between countries or regions, or the elimination of the crisis of the system or the cancellation of revolutionary upheavals or the inevitable adoption, in the manner of straightjacket of a certain code of conduct by all countries in their internal and external policy?

The reality is too dramatic to give credit to such fantasies of the ideology of globalisation.

We are witness to a crisis situation in the capitalist system which is evident in the tendency of slow growth rate in economic activity in the long terms as well as market cyclic movement which include profound drops in the middle of the 70s, and the beginning of the 80s, and 90s. Scare investment general indebtedness, unsustainable levels of unemployment and the fall in profit margins are some of the symptoms of the fragile health of the economy.

The volatility and instability represented by enormous bulk of capital flowing erratically without effective regulation and with great destructive capacity capable of overthrowing national economies and governments within few hours cannot be overlook. The vertiginous separation of speculative capital from the real productive base as an expression of the parasitic state of capitalism has its limits.

On the other hand, globalisation does not signify an automatic solution to the contradictions and heterogeneity accompanying the development of capitalism. Neither does it mean the end of history. Rather the disappearance of the socialist camp, the re-evaluation of economic and political aspects defining the strategies of international relations by industrialised countries and the present discernible development of economic blocs and the competition between them are aspects which, as a whole, seem to be shaping a new stage of inter-imperialist rivalry

Unequal development is evident, more than ever before, with the consequent tendency to reproduce on an even large scale the North-South differences that have historically accompanied the development of capitalism. Only that now, the contradiction between high levels of scientific and technological growth—which explain the need for social use and control—and struggles but also the struggle for the survival of species in social relations continuity of life in a tenable ecological environment.

Out Latin America and Caribbean region together with Africa and a part of Asia constitute an extreme case of marginalisation with respect to the world economic dynamics, loss of presence in the global functioning of the system and international penetration, which, in practice, does not go beyond debt-servicing to international private banks.

Neo-liberal economic policies, which follow the prescriptions of the IMF, have played an indubitable role in designing this pathetic and unequal picture. Almost the whole of the underdeveloped world has been homogenised in the same practice of total privatisation and commercial opening at any cost, as if these were the only possible formulae for economic success. Nevertheless, those who praise it while speaking and propose these formulae from government, academic and international economic forums are carefully disassociating from them.

The consequences of this intellectual and political capitulation, which has forgotten the efforts to postulate development theories and policies from the point of view of underdeveloped countries, for the Third World are impossible to quantify but the tragedy is visible; there is too much poverty, hunger and inequity in the wake of privatisation and the “save yourself if you can” slogan of the perfect market.

Today, one is witness to an abysmal gap between the rich and the poor, not only between developed and underdeveloped countries, but also in parts of the Third World. Such a gap is increasing in all developed economies as well, furthered by, among other things, the migration of the poor, and this is sought to be stopped by fuelling the fire with racism, xenophobia and repression.

In 1960, the top 20% of the world population in terms of wealth received 30 times higher income than the bottom 20%. Today, the top 20% gets 60 times more. This comparison takes into account

the distribution between developed and underdeveloped countries but if one takes into account the unequal distribution within countries, then the top 20% gets at least 150 times more than the bottom 20%.

Another way of expressing this tragedy is that the top 20% corners 82.7% of total world income, while the bottom 20% receives just 1.4%.

In Latin America, the favourite ground for experimentation of new liberal policies, there are about 8.1 million destitute in a state of poverty difficult to overcome. This means that even after 15 years of sustained application of neo-liberal policies purportedly to eradicate state inefficiency and allow free market and private initiative to bring development, almost one in five Latin Americans is statistically classified as destitute.

Neo-liberal globalisation has not succeeded in establishing political stability after the disappearance of the erstwhile USSR and so-called real socialism.

On the contrary, the strong wave of ethnic explosion territorial disputes and religious fundamentalism, the elimination and surfacing of states in the uproar of local wars emphasis that the momentary triumph over socialism has not eliminated the inherent conflicts in the capitalist system, and that this has surfaced from its profound nucleus of exploitation, exclusion and inequity, in new, surprising forms as well as old and dangerous forms like the rebirth of fascism.

It is not merely a question of an unstable, disintegrated and politically more explosive world but also destruction of our environment. It wouldn't be difficult to demonstrate that environment pillaging and neo-liberal capitalist globalisation inexorably move hand in hand because they have greater interest in getting the most out of the market than in reason.

2. The Collapse of Socialism in East Europe And USSR: Some Assessments

Under these conditions, there is not the least doubt that there are only two ways out-either the continuation of the barbaric capitalist system or the search for an alternative to this state. For us, Cubans, and for millions of people, socialism continues to be the alternative.

It is not socialist truth that failed. Those who bore the historical responsibility of carrying it forward, of incorporating it in our everyday lives and our personal experiences were the ones who went wrong. It is sensitive issue since the future of humanity is at stake.

Without intending to stop and analyse the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe and the USSR, I can remind that the so-called domino effect did not reach our country.

The fall of socialism in Eastern Europe and the USSR had its historical, socio-economic and political causes, which we have been elucidating from time to time. But what has been demonstrated very well is that this European process did not mean the failure of socialism as a system.

Neither does it imply the incompetence of Marxism-Leninism as guides for our actions. It does, however, signify the disintegration of dogmatic and vulgar Marxism, which gained strength in these countries as official theory and while it buried many central principles of our classics, it elevated others, which are without a scientific basis and only served to justify political positions.

Everyone knows that the classics did not design a scheme of socialist society they only evolved a basis thesis. The socialism, which succumbed, had been distancing itself from the socialist ideals conceived by Marx, Engels, Lenin and other Marxist. Their model was mechanically copied in the countries associated with the CMEA, borrowing schemes, which were valid perhaps for one kind of situation, but not for another, thus completely ignoring national realities and traditions.

At the time for the fall of socialism in Europe and the USSR, the revolutionary forces had reached an ebb, which had international repercussions, and Cuba was passing through a process of rectification of errors and negative tendencies initiated in 1986 under the Party's direction. We had reached the conclusion that the model of the direction of the economy, copied in good measure from the Soviet experience, had to be submitted to fundamental changes.

That model which permeated Cuban social life had led us to mistakes and negative tendencies, which had led to deviations in the construction of socialism towards un-revolutionary paths.

We began the rectification process on the social scale, which ranged from the economic sphere to the political life of our country, with a view of rectify and perfect our socialism form socialist positions.

The process of perfection of our socialism was obstructed due to the disappearance of socialism in Europe and the USSR, and a new stage, not known hitherto, started when a world with which we had 75% of our foreign trade and from which we received fuel and other raw materials for our industry and agriculture and finance for our development amongst other advantages disappeared. Thus, a completely new phase began for us, in which we adopted an ensemble of economic policies with the objective of saving our Motherland, the Revolution and Socialism.

Today, the progressive forces are faced with a new geopolitical situation, where imperialism, specially the United States, is trying to establish a new world order in which the principles and values of capitalism would prevail and through which the United States would imposes its hegemony making the rest of the world surrender to its decisions, managing the world according to its whims.

3. Socialism as a System

In the present international conditions, it is reasserted for us that socialism is an imperative not only as the logical consequences of the development of productive forces at an international scale but, moreover, as the only alternative to guarantee human survival. Today, the constant worsening of global problems, on an ever larger scale, manifests the historical limitation of capitalism.

It is evident that today, global problems-factors that influence at an international scale-together with the internal class struggles stimulate the fight for a new social regime. The struggle between capital and workers is increasingly internationalised, forcing us to closely look at socialism beyond national frontiers and contradictions, and ratify the currency of the slogan of classical Marxism: Workers of al countries, untied. And that far from losing its validity, it incorporates other social sectors and movements suffer the consequences of capital.

This aspiration necessarily transcends the existing frame-work of classes, national borders and becomes a necessity for the international community.

The afore-mentioned must signify not falling into the old error of designing a unique abstract model of socialism for all the countries. This aspiration must be for developing a socialism based on the specific characteristics of each nation for region.

In the wake of a generalised crisis of values throughout the world, demonstrating the possibility, viability as well as the desirability of socialism while creating new emancipating projects becomes indispensable. There would be not social change if the objective values which such a modification must generate, were not subjectively assumed beforehand as desirable values.

We assume that socialism is the only real option to improve ethics in social relations and must not slacken in its efforts to demonstrate, theoretically and practically, its clear superiority in moulding the highest human values: namely, Justice, equality, equity, liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, national sovereignty and solidarity.

Such a society continues to be the clear alternative not just to capitalism but also to the frustrating experiences of Eastern Europe and the USSR. Similarly, it is a fact that the errors, deviations and excesses that took place there in the name of "real socialism" together with the exaggerations of trans-national channels of information have extraordinarily devalued the image of socialism in the eyes of the workers and the oppressed of the world.

It is necessary to project a new and fresh image of socialism based on a just and free society, which, while catering to the specificity of each case, would present an adequate correlation between plan and market, equality and efficiency, centralism and democracy, which would promote a true feeling of ownership among the workers with respect to the means of production, which would respect and take into account differences, which would preserve the natural environment and which would be a genuine expression of popular will.

In a nutshell, it would be what our comrade Fidel had stressed when he said, "for me socialism is a total change in the life of people, establishment of new values and a new culture, which must be founded on the solidarity between men and not on selfishness and individualism."

Socialism will not appear in historical perspective to be a

modernisation of present society but a revolution in its dominant structures. In this sense, the question of capturing power remains a basic requisite although it assumes different forms varying with the conditions of different countries or regions.

The socialism alternative has never been so necessary, but it is a paradox of our times that capitalism knows how to make the most of the recent defeats, and still has a consensus that must be reversed by the forces of the left.

4. The Cuban Revolution and Socialist Development

In our history, which is the living memory of past events, marked by heroism and resistance, we the Cubans, first fought against Spain for Independence and to free ourselves of colonial slavery, and almost simultaneously we confronted the United States to oppose their intervention and interference. Patriotism and anti-imperialism have been two organic forms of struggle present during the course of the Revolution since 1868 when the first movement for emancipation began.

Martí, in his political testament, came forward to denounce American expansionist designs and warned against the dangers lurking over the people of our America.

The long years, some of them very crucial, of our country's history reveal dimensions of the combat that has been waged to liberate the Cuban people from this powerful neighbour, who has not stopped at attacking, dominating, occupying it by force, destroying its riches and culture, and despite all this, has not been able to bring it under its control, nor has it been able to conquer it with economic, psychological or biological wars.

A hundred years have passed since the first imperialist war, in which the Yankees deprived our freedom fighters of their right to govern, imposed the Platt Amendment curtailing the country's sovereignty and forcibly set themselves on a piece of our national territory, which remains till today an insolent naval base, in Guantanamo.

Obviously, in the patriotic consciousness of the Cubans, anti-imperialism became an opportune expression for the defence of the Cuban nation and its identity in the face of the threat of complete extinction.

Socialist Cuba broke away from the fatalistic scheme of "Manifest Destiny" of the Western Hemisphere. Cuba will not be forgiven for

this historical challenge, which for some of its distinguished academics was “a policy mistake of the North Americans in dealing with the uprising coming down from the Sierra Maestra”.

On the 1st of January 1959, the actions of the guerrillas in the mountains and the combatants in the cities resulted in the revolutionary triumph of the uprising amidst the most intense class struggle but then power rested with the working people and its Rebel Army.

The oligarchy and its supporters were left without an audience; its press had no readers, and the multiparty regime of the bourgeois latifundist bloc collapsed definitely without and legal intervention.

The leaders of the Revolution warned that the warned that the most difficult and dangerous moments of that process were yet to come, as confrontations with the Yankee imperialists and counterrevolution had begun.

Under such circumstances, the unity of the revolutionaries became even more imperative and urgent, and they agreed to the formation of a single Party as a means to guarantee the unity of the people.

The triumphant revolution not only united the nation around its national and social programme, but also unleashed the forces of real human heroism in society, unprecedented enthusiasm and complete revolutionary zeal characteristic of society which was forging ahead through its history of struggles and combats.

The Cubans have firmly defended their sovereignty and independence and their right to self-determination, this universally valid principle for all states, which is sought to be taken away from Cuba through peaceful transition to capitalism. Terrorism and other aggressive acts are used to impose this.

The basis of the politics of the Cuban Revolution has not changed. Far from going back, Cuba continues to transform itself, amidst the escalation of North American hostility and blockade, without renouncing those principles, which it, as a sovereign nation, opted for advancing towards greater social justice and to create the foundations to build a socialist society.

Enriched with the best tradition of revolutionary thought, the Marxist-Leninist ideology sustains the thought and actions of

Cuban revolutionaries, and together with the universal ideas of Marti, it constitutes the ideological strength of our people and Party.

Along with the socialist seed, which forms the root of Cuban revolutionary thought, internationalism-an expression that identifies with the struggles of the exploited in other corners of the world-is inseparable from the projections of the Cuban revolution. There are ample examples, but it is sufficient to remember two beautiful example of this sentiment in our peoples: among others, Marti and Maceo did not conceive Cuban independence without the independence of Puerto Rico, and the Cuban Revolution responded to a historical debt towards the brotherly African peoples.

In the task of educating the new generations in these ideas, the action and the message left behind by Ernesto Che Guevara acquire exemplary and imperishable significance.

Patriotism, internationalism and socialism whether it is historical tradition or the canons of our ideals, are founded and transformed into inseparable concepts, which express the strength of the society we construct and defend.

The ideals of human dignity, decorum and social equality, in short, the aspiration to construct a more just and advanced society is a right claimed by Cubans in the midst of so much scepticism, imperial pressures and ideological confusions prevailing in today's world.

The redeeming message of our history has the ideological support of socialists of the stature of Carlos Balino, founder of the Martian party and Julio Antonio Mella of the first Cuban communist party.

These ideals grew out of the ideological strength of the working class and other progressive sectors during the neo-colonial republic. When the Cuban Revolution triumphed in 1959, the ideas of socialism were alien neither to the historical process nor to the main protagonists. Our socialism is a result not of an imported model it was not imposed on us by external forces. The society we constructed was based on Cuban reality, the level of development of our material conditions and the spiritual life of our peoples.

In the Cuban conception of socialism, revolutionary humanism

creatively applied to all stages according to the concrete conditions has been and is a fundamental aspect. We continue to be loyal to Che who characterised our society as “....a Marxist, socialist, congruent or approximately congruent system, in which man is in the key position, the individual is spoken of, man is spoken of and the importance he has in the revolutionary process.”

Without deviating from the socialist essence, in our country, we have introduced capitalist and market elements, which signifies without being led astray by the false recipe of neo-liberalism.

In the present conditions, despite the difficult economic juncture, the essential socialist principles are preserved. Social property, social justice and policies benefiting the majority are given importance. The unwavering direction exercised by the Party on society, the structure and functioning of the Socialist State, of the mass organisations in order to promote economic development, to improve living conditions, renewing social development programmes in short the struggle to preserve and consolidate the values of material and spiritual life of socialist society.

The reform introduced in the Cuban economy have not meant retrenchment of workers, privatisation, abolition of social security, or closure of schools and hospitals, although we all know the price the people have paid in terms of deprivations and scarcities of all kinds. The market harms certain values encourage individualism and self-centredness against which we fight by reinforcing patriotic and socialist consciousness, which characterise our revolution.

For the Communist Party of Cuba, building socialism also involves the search for the singularity or specificity of every region of the country. The possibilities of success lie in this and not in copying. Therefore, we think that there is no single or exclusive road to build a new society, and thus we respect everybody's experience, which we must study, in order to choose the most appropriate one.

In our socialism, the role of politics, ideology, ethics, along with the necessary gradual attention to the social sphere, depending on the economic possibilities, constitute the moments of dialectical development of Cuban society, thus making it different from other societies overcome by injustices, bereft of human solidarity, immersed in misery, subject to political corruption, ungovernability victims of a brutal oppression at the hand of

trans-national capital.

If socialism-said Fidel-is the science of example, ethnic guides the tendencies in men and women to improve in life and society. Che contributed, as few did, to this effort and Fidel, under this influence, and the Party have, in its organisational and educational work maintained that ethics is an essential branch of revolutionary resistance.

Ernesto Che Guevara is the paradigm of human perfection, which Cubans aspire for (there are those who are willing to lay down their lives to serve as examples of this paradigm). He contributed significantly to analyse, study and interpret our Revolution with a new, fresh and autochthonous understanding, endowing it with enriching thoughts and actions.

The concept of this new man became possible due to the impressive result of the Revolution, and doctors, teachers, leaders of workers, simple comrades, students scientists, professionals and intellectuals draw inspiration from his work and emulate him in their daily work with grand gestures of sacrifice and heroism. These are people who think-and they are right in doing so- that Che lives on within us.

There is a very simple yet impossible question for the capitalist system that Cuban socialism gives utmost importance: "to uphold human dignity and to make it, as Marti announced, the principal law of society."

We are proud to be able to depend on a new people where new men and women are being formed, nor as an impossible ideal or belonging to a faraway future, but as a possible ideal through social consciousness transforming into revolutionary practice.

Revolutionary unity has been a decisive factor in reaching this point. Thanks to this solidarity with the Party and its leaders, the Cuban people have been able to face, with admirable resistance, the conditions imposed by the disappearance of European socialism and the Soviet Union, made even more oppressive because of the criminal and genocidal blockade.

Our unity is based on a political system established with true democratic principles. They have a genuine socialist character like for example, the most important political, social, economic and juridical decisions of the State are taken in consultation with

civil society and its organisations; popular participation in government at all levels and the elections of the candidates and representatives of the people. Our Party neither puts up, nor does it choose or revoke the elected representative. This is the people's right. An example of this democracy has been the elections held last Sunday and its results, where the people, by their vote, have clearly supported our revolution because the people form the main principle of this Revolution.

Democracy is another element, which characterises and strengthens socialism. Nothing can express the principles of our democracy better than Fidel's ideas embodied in the statement that: "Democracy, for me, means that governments are closely linked to the people, emerge from them, have their support and are wholly dedicated to work and fight for the people and their interests. For me democracy is the defence of the rights of all citizens, among these, the right to independence, freedom national dignity, honour, for me democracy means fraternity between men, true equality of men, and equal opportunities for all men, for every human being born in this world and for every human mind."

This conception, which has taken shape in the Cuban Revolution, is being discredited by our enemies, and at the same time, they want to impose on us the spent scheme of representative democracy, which will only mean a return to capitalism.

5. In Search of a Way out of the Present Crisis

Dear Comrades,

Apart from the national situation of a country, world politics is characterised by discredited, repressive executive and legislative sanctions, which has increased the contradictions within parties and political steams, thus leading to factionalism, growing mistrust in electoral systems and process, high expenditures on recently elected leaders, increase in absenteeism, proliferation of corruption related scandals, growth of production and trafficking of drugs, aggravation of delinquency and institutionalised violence, marginalisation of vast social sectors, use of demagoguery as a means of capitalising on the frustration and desperation of the masses and other phenomenon leading to what is defined by some as crisis of governance." This crisis is reflected in the increase in social and popular movements often without leadership from any political party, as well as the unprecedented increase in fraud and corruption.

As an expression of concern by the dominant elite for the worsening situation diverse initiatives have proliferated for designing a social model of control capable of neutralising the effects of the socio-economic crisis. Some of these propagate maintaining the neo-liberal pattern of accumulation, while others seek to find alternatives from within the system.

The increasing transfer of sovereignty and shift in decision making towards the centres of world power and trans-national organisations is provoking a power void in underdeveloped and half-developed Nation-States. Politics and its institutions are reduced to a homogeneous system, which increasingly does away with the identity of parties, while many of the Left organisations are forced to work within “variables” and “norms”, which only allow them slight divergences from established capitalist criteria.

The power of Nation-States, one of the objectives for which revolutionary war is waged, is beginning to get undermined. Therefore it is our priority to reconsider the question of power struggle, as well as how to evaluate the instruments and forms of popular Left participation in society. From now onwards, revolutionary struggles would have an internationalist component and changes will be impossible without a confrontation with groups and institutions which are taking the decisions today.

At the same time, the change to intensive production, concentration and contraction of capital and increasing retrenchment of salaried workers along with social fragmentation, political and cultural segmentation, brought about by the actual process of change in capitalism is giving rise to profound transformations in the social and class composition of our society, which, in turn, bring about a variation in popular class composition, apart from relativising some space and formulae of political alignment among the Left. These days, the growth of the working class is not noticeable, rather a growing exclusion of the work force is taking place, and those excluded are often reduced to an informal and marginalized status.

Progressive parties as well as other political and economic institutions are subject to the effects of the imposing international relations, which hinders political economic and social transformation so essential for overcoming dependence and underdevelopment.

The left is faced with a qualitatively different situation owing to

the disappearance of so-called “real socialism”, the changes in world capital and mutations in the societies where struggles are going on.

One of the most important questions in present left politics is the politics of the alliance as a condition to respond to neo-liberalism. Though every party and organisation must evaluate, in their respective countries and regions, the situation, the aspects to be included in the formation of alliance in consonance with the characteristics and peculiarities of their reality.

In our opinion, the coming together of revolutionary forces with other sectors around short, medium or long term objectives should be a process in which the parties are allowed to pursue their main interests. It isn't acceptable that one renounces socialism or revolutionary positions in order to be accepted. Therefore, firstly and most importantly, it is necessary to define the objectives and the basis of the alliance.

Unlike the permanent transactions of traditional parties, an alliance in which revolutionary organisations participate must not be reduced to negotiations between the elite, leaders and national executive. It doesn't serve any purpose to promote agreements, which will weaken us or contribute in undermining our internal unity and political stability of our organisations. The support and understanding of our mass following is essential for success. Including their criteria and interests is necessary and possible. There cannot be a solid alliance without the support and participation of the popular sectors. The essence of any alliance, which wants to have left perspectives, is that it is built from, by and for the downtrodden.

It is logical that coming together means negotiation, in which the sides give in on some questions and are favoured on others. But the only thing that a revolutionary cannot negotiate is the principles.

If our immediate objective is to defeat neo-liberalism, it is necessary to make efforts to incorporate or influence all those who oppose the model and not just some of them. Alliances between two parties to exclude the third force will only take us in the direction of the old tradition of sectarianism, which have proved to be ineffective in fighting against imperialist domination.

The development of conflicts and contradictions in the system are engendering a large diversity of new social sectors and are renewing the profile of others, all of whom are excluded from the model. This is creating the conditions and potential for broad politics of alliance-ecologists farmers, the landless and the roofless, those fighting for health and social protection, politically autonomous groups organised along gender, religion, race and ethnicity. It is also important to include the marginalized, unorganised sectors, which can help in creating a new emancipating force.

On the other hand the unfolding contradictions in the model, especially its concentrated and exclusive character, is modifying the projections of some sectors, which were earlier in favour of capitalism and are no longer so. This is the case of a part of the middle class, the small of medium sized companies, for whom the growing polarisation leaves no space. It also includes patriotic and nationalist army personnel as well as other affected sections, which must be included in anti neo-liberal projects.

In the IV Forum Meeting in Sao Paulo, Fidel expressed the view that: "The defeat of neo-liberalism means creating a hope for the future to preserve conditions for progress because the limits to our progress lie in capitalism, and there can be no human progress without challenging it. This would be a task for another moment, if not for other generations...." At the same time he insisted that equanimity and sagacity are necessary for defeating neo-liberalism, as it is possible to emerge victorious only "without recourse to any kind of extremism, with a broad based movement, while uniting forces and forming alliances in order to win the battle against the enemy, which is creating tremendous and unbearable social conditions."

Comrades,

The sessions of our V Party congress concluded only a few days back. It was a process which began months ago, beginning from the grass roots, where the fundamental theses not only for members but also for the people were analysed. It has moreover been an example of democracy in our Party.

The Congress concurred that the path adopted in the IV Congress in 1991 was the correct one, that the Revolution has been able to resist, that we are here defending Socialism and our independence, and ready to achieve economic development of Socialism.

As laid down in our Congress imperialist ideas are discredited and cannot convince anyone, the world order they want to impose is not viable and has no future. They can buy, corrupt, but they cannot conquer the hearts and minds of the people.

Despite the enormous difficulties, which our country is facing with an economic crisis imposed and reinforced by imperialist North America, we corroborate that our economic recuperation is in progress and it is irreversible.

Cuban communists analysed that in the wake of the ideological campaign unleashed by capitalism that the state must desist from participating in the economy, the most revolutionary thing we can do is to demonstrate that a socialist venture can function very efficiently.

As our First Secretary Comrade Fidel announced, the key task before the Party in the coming years is to ensure that inefficiency is an exception and not the rule. Thus, we, the Cuban Communist, proclaimed that we would work to show that socialism, with social justice as an essential component of its principles, is efficient and that this is the only viable option for the genuine happiness of the people.

Thank you.

(Translated from Spanish by Vijaya Venkataraman)