

RAÚL CASTRO

## *Speech at the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba*

Comrades all,

The opening of the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba this afternoon marks a date of extraordinary significance in our history, the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of the socialist nature of our Revolution by its Commander in Chief, Fidel Castro Ruz, on April 16, 1961, as we paid our last respects to those killed the day before during the bombings of the air bases. This action, which was the prelude to the Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) mercenary invasion organized and funded by the United States government, was part of its plans to destroy the Revolution and restore its domination over Cuba in league with the Organization of American States (OAS).

On that occasion, Fidel said to the people already armed and inflamed with passion: “This is what they cannot forgive us...that we have made a Socialist Revolution right under the nose of the United States...” “Comrades, workers and farmers, this is the Socialist and democratic Revolution of the people, by the people and for the people.

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And for this Revolution of the people, by the people and for the people, we are willing to give our lives.”

The response to this appeal would not take long; in the fight against the aggressor a few hours later, the combatants of the Ejército Rebelde, police agents and militiamen shed their blood, for the first time, in defense of socialism and attained victory in less than 72 hours under the personal leadership of comrade Fidel.

The Military Parade that we watched this morning, dedicated to the young generations, and particularly the vigorous popular march that followed, are eloquent proof of the fortitude of the Revolution to follow the example of the heroic fighters of Playa Girón.

Next May 1st, on the occasion of the International Workers Day, we will do likewise throughout the country to show the unity of Cubans in defense of their independence and national sovereignty, which as proven by history, can only be conquered through Socialism.

This Congress, the supreme body of the Party, as set forth in article 20 of its Statutes, brings together today one thousand delegates representing nearly 800 thousand party members affiliated to over 61 thousand party cells. But, this Congress really started on November 9 last year, with the release of the Draft Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution, a subject that, as previously indicated, will be at the center of the debates of this meeting that is regarded with great expectations by our people.

As of that moment, numerous seminars were organized to clarify and to delve into the content of the Guidelines in order to adequately train the cadres and officials who would lead the discussions of the material by the party members, mass organizations and the people in general.

The discussions extended for three months, from December 1, 2010 to February 28 of this year, with the participation of 8, 913,838 people in more than 163 thousand meetings held by the different organizations in which over three million people offered their contributions. I want to make clear that, although it has not been accurately determined yet, the total figure of participants includes tens of thousands of members of the Party and the Young Communist League who attended the meetings in their respective cells but also those convened in their work or study centers in addition to those of their communities. This is also the case of non-party members who

took part in the meetings organized at their work centers and later at their communities.

Even the National Assembly of People's Power dedicated nearly two work sessions in its latest Ordinary Meeting held this past December to analyze with the deputies the Draft Guidelines.

This process has exposed the capacity of the Party to conduct a serious and transparent dialogue with the people on any issue, regardless of how sensitive it might be, especially as we try to create a national consensus on the features that should characterize the country's Social and Economic Model.

At the same time, the data collected from the results of the discussions become a formidable working tool for the government and Party leadership at all levels, like a popular referendum given the depth, scope and pace of the changes we must introduce.

In a truly extensive democratic exercise, the people freely stated their views, clarified their doubts, proposed amendments, expressed their dissatisfactions and discrepancies, and suggested that we work toward the solution of other problems not included in the document.

Once again the unity and confidence of most Cubans in the Party and the Revolution were put to the test; a unity that far from denying the difference of opinions is strengthened and consolidated by them. Every opinion, without exception, was incorporated to the analysis, which helped to enhance the Draft submitted to the consideration of the delegates to this Congress.

The Economic Policy Commission of the 6th Party Congress first entrusted with the elaboration of the Draft Guidelines and then with the organization of the discussions has focused on the following five issues:

1. Reformulation of the guidelines bearing in mind the opinions gathered.
2. Organization, orientation and control of their implementation.
3. The thorough training of the cadres and other participants for the implementation of some of the measures already enforced.
4. Systematic oversight of the agencies and institutions in charge of enforcing the decisions stemming from the guidelines and evaluation of their results.
5. Leading the process of information to the people.

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In compliance with the aforesaid, the Draft Guidelines were reformulated and then submitted to analysis by both the Political Bureau and the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, on March 19 and 20, respectively, with the participation of the Secretariat of the Party's Central Committee and the top leaders of the Central Trade Union (CTC), the Young Communist League (UJC) and the other mass organizations, approved at that level—also as a draft—and then delivered to you for its examination during three days in every provincial delegation to the Congress and for its discussion at the five commissions of this party meeting for its subsequent approval.

The original document contained 291 guidelines; 16 of them were moved to others; 94 preserved their phrasing; 181 had their content modified; and, 36 new guidelines were incorporated for a grand total of 311 guidelines in the current draft.

A simple arithmetic operation with these numbers avows the quality of the consultation process as a result of which approximately two thirds of the guidelines—68% to be exact—was reformulated.

The principle that guided this process was that the validity of a proposal would not depend on the number of opinions expressed about it. This is shown by the fact that several guidelines were either modified or removed based on the opinion of only one person or a small number of them.

*It is also worth explaining that some opinions were not included at this stage either because the issue deserved a more exhaustive analysis for which the necessary conditions did not exist or because they openly contradicted the essence of socialism, as for example 45 proposals advocating the concentration of property.*

I mean that, although the prevailing tendency was a general understanding of and support for the content of the Guidelines, there was no unanimity; and that is precisely what was needed for we really wanted this to be a democratic and serious consultation with the people.

For this reason, I can assure you that the Guidelines are an expression of our people's will, contained in the policy of the Party, the Government and the State, to update the Economic and Social Model in order to secure the continuity and irreversibility of Socialism as well as the economic development of the country and the improvement of the living standard of our people combined with the

indispensable formation of ethical and political values.

As expected, most of the proposals made during the discussion of the Draft Guidelines were focused on Chapter VI, "Social Policy" and Chapter II "Macroeconomic Policies"; both accounted for 50.9% of the total, followed, in descending order, by Chapter XI, "Construction, Housing and Water Resources Policy"; Chapter X, "Transportation Policy"; and, Chapter I, "Economic Management Model." In fact, 75% of the opinions expressed focused on these five chapters out of a total of twelve.

On the other hand, 67% of the proposals referred to 33 guidelines, that is, 11% of the total. In fact, the highest number of proposals pertained to guidelines number 162, dealing with the removal of the ration book; 61 and 62, on the pricing policy; 262, on passengers' transportation; 133, on education; 54, related to the establishment of a single currency; and, 143, on the quality of healthcare services.

Undoubtedly, *the ration book and its removal spurred most of the contributions of the participants in the debates*, and it is only natural. Two generations of Cubans have spent their lives under this rationing system that, despite its harmful egalitarian quality, has for four decades ensured every citizen access to basic food at highly subsidized derisory prices.

This distribution mechanism introduced in times of shortages during the 1960s, in the interest of providing equal protection to our people from those involved in speculation and hoarding with a lucrative spirit, has become in the course of the years an intolerable burden to the economy and discouraged work, in addition to eliciting various types of transgressions.

Since the ration book is designed to provide equal coverage to 11 million Cubans, there are more than a few examples of absurdities such as allocating a quota of coffee to the newborn. The same happened with cigarettes until September 2010 as they were supplied to smokers and non-smokers alike thus fostering the expansion of that unsafe habit in the population.

Regarding this sensitive issue, the span of opinions is very broad, from those who suggest dismissing it right away to others who categorically oppose its removal and propose to ration everything, the industrial goods included. Others are of the view that in order to successfully prevent hoarding and ensure everybody's access to basic

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foods, it would be necessary, in a first stage, to keep the products rationed even if no longer subsidized. Quite a few have recommended depriving of the ration book those who neither study nor work or advised that the people with higher incomes relinquish that system voluntarily.

Certainly, the use of the ration book to distribute the basic foods, which was justified under concrete historic circumstances, has remained with us for too long even when it contradicts the substance of the distribution principle that should characterize Socialism, that is, "From each in accordance with his ability and to each in accordance with his labor," and this situation should be resolved.

In this connection, it seems appropriate to recall what comrade Fidel indicated in his Central Report to the First Party Congress on December 17, 1975: "There is no doubt that in the organization of our economy we have erred on the side of idealism and sometimes even ignored the reality of the objective economic laws we should comply with."

The problem we are facing has nothing to do with concepts, but rather with how to do it, when to do it, and at what pace. The removal of the ration book is not an end in itself, and it should not be perceived as an isolated decision but rather as one of the first indispensable measures aimed at the eradication of the deep distortions affecting the operation of the economy and society as a whole.

No member of the leadership of this country in their right mind would think of removing that system by decree, all at once, before creating the proper conditions to do so, which means undertaking other transformations of the Economic Model with a view to increasing labor efficiency and productivity in order to guarantee stable levels of production and supplies of basic goods and services accessible to all citizens but no longer subsidized.

Of course, this issue is closely related to pricing and to the establishment of a single currency, as well as to wages and to the "reversed pyramid" phenomenon which as spelled out at the Parliament last December 18, is expressed in the mismatch between salaries and the ranking or importance of the work performed. These problems came up often in the contributions made by the citizens.

In Cuba, under socialism, there will never be space for "shock therapies" that go against the neediest, who have traditionally been the staunchest supporters of the Revolution; as opposed to the packages

of measures frequently applied on orders of the International Monetary Fund and other international economic organizations to the detriment of the Third World peoples and, lately enforced in the highly developed nations where students' and workers' demonstrations are violently suppressed.

The Revolution will not leave any Cuban helpless. The social welfare system is being reorganized to ensure a rational and deferential support to those who really need it. Instead of massively subsidizing products as we do now, we shall gradually provide for those people lacking other support.

*This principle is absolutely valid for the restructuring of the work force, –an ongoing process– streamlining the bloated payrolls in the public sector on the basis of a strict assessment of the workers' demonstrated capacity.* This process will continue slowly but uninterruptedly, its pace determined by our capacity to create the necessary conditions for its full implementation.

Other elements will have an impact on this process, *including the expansion and easing of labor in the non-public sector.* This modality of employment that over 200 thousand Cubans have adopted from October last year until today –twice as many as before– make up an alternative endorsed by the current legislation, therefore, *it should enlist the support, assistance and protection of the officials at all levels while demanding strict adherence to the ensuing obligations, including tax payment.*

The growth of the non-public sector of the economy, far from an alleged privatization of the social property as some theoreticians would have us believe, is to become an active element facilitating the construction of socialism in Cuba since it will allow the State to focus on rising the efficiency of the basic means of production, which are the property of the entire people, while relieving itself from those management of activities that are not strategic for the country.

This, on the other hand, will make it easier for the State to continue ensuring healthcare and education services free of charge and on equal footing to all of the people and their adequate protection through the Social Welfare System; the promotion of physical education and sports; the defense of the national identity; and, the preservation of the cultural heritage, and the artistic, scientific and historic wealth of the nation.

Then, the Socialist State will have more possibilities to make a

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reality of the idea expressed by Martí that can be found heading our Constitution: “I want the first Law of our Republic to be the Cubans’ cult of the full dignity of man.”

It is the responsibility of the State to defend national independence and sovereignty, values in which the Cubans take pride, and to continue securing the public order and safety that make Cuba one of the safest and most peaceful nations of the world, without drug-trafficking or organized crime; without beggars or child labor; without the mounted police charging against workers, students and other segments of the population; without extrajudicial executions, clandestine jails or tortures, despite the groundless smear campaigns constantly orchestrated against us overlooking the fact that such realities are, foremost, basic human rights that most people on Earth can’t even aspire to.

Now, in order to guarantee all of these conquests of Socialism, without renouncing their quality and scope, the social programs should be characterized by greater rationality so that better and sustainable results can be obtained in the future with lower spending and keeping the balance with the general economic situation of the country.

As you can see in the Guidelines, these ideas do not contradict the significance we attach to the separate roles to be played in the economy by the state institutions, on the one hand, and the enterprises, on the other, an issue that for decades has been fraught with confusion and improvisations and that we are forced to resolve on a mid-term basis in the context of the strengthening and improvement of institutionalization.

A full understanding of these concepts will permit a solid advance while avoiding backward steps in the gradual decentralization of powers from the Central to the local governments, and from the ministries and other national agencies *in favor of the increasing autonomy of the socialist State-funded companies.*

*The excessively centralized model characterizing our economy at the moment shall move in an orderly fashion, with discipline and the participation of all workers, toward a decentralized system where planning will prevail, as a socialist feature of management, albeit without ignoring the current market trends.* This will contribute to the flexibility and constant updating of the plan.



The lesson taught by practical experience is that an excessive centralization inhibits the development of initiatives in the society and in the entire production line, where the cadres got used to having everything decided “at the top” and thus ceased feeling responsible for the outcome of the entities they headed.

Our entrepreneurs, with some exceptions, settled themselves comfortably safe and quiet “to wait” and developed an allergy to the risks involved in making decisions, that is, in being right or wrong. *This mentality characterized by inertia should definitely be removed to be able to cut the knots that grip the development of the productive forces.* This is a pursuit of strategic significance, thus it is no accident that it has been reflected one way or another in the 24 guidelines contained in Chapter I, “Economic Management Model.”

As far as this issue is concerned, we cannot indulge in improvisations or act hastily. In order to decentralize and change that mentality, it is indispensable to elaborate a framework of regulations clearly defining the powers of and functions at every level, from the national to the local, invariably accompanied by the corresponding accounting, financial and management oversight.

Progress is already being made in that direction. The studies began almost two years ago for improving the operation as well as the structure and makeup of the government at the different levels. These resulted in the enforcement of the Council of Ministers Regulation, the reorganization of the work system with the State and Government cadres, the introduction of a planning procedure for the most important activities, the establishment of the organizational bases to provide the Government with an accurate and timely information system supported by its own info-communications infrastructure, and the creation of the provinces of Artemisa and Mayabeque, on experimental basis and under a new structural and functional concept.

*To begin decentralizing powers, it will be necessary for the cadres of the State and the companies to redeem the obvious role of contracts in the economy, as expressed in guideline number 10.* This will also help bring back order and discipline to making and obtaining payments, a subject in which a good part of our economy has been getting poor grades.

As a no less important byproduct, the appropriate use of contracts as regulatory instruments of relations among the various economic actors will become an effective antidote against the extended habit of

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“reunionism,” that is, calling an excessive number of meetings and other collective functions, often presided by senior officials and uselessly attended by many others, only to enforce what the parties involved recognized as rights and obligations in the contract signed, and whose fulfillment they have failed to demand from those required to do so.

In this respect, it is worth emphasizing that 19 opinions, registered in 9 provinces, claimed for a reduction in the number of meetings and their duration to the minimum indispensable. This issue I intend to take up again when dealing with the functioning of the Party.

We are convinced that the mission ahead of us in connection with this and other issues related to the updating of the Economic Model is full of complexities and interrelations that, one way or another, touch on every aspect of the society as a whole. Therefore, *we are aware that it is not something that can be solved overnight, not even in one year, and that it will take at least five years to implement it comprehensively and harmoniously.* And, when this is achieved, it will be necessary to never stop and to continue working for its improvement in order to successfully face the new challenges brought up by development.

Metaphorically speaking, it might be said that every now and then, as the scenario changes, the country should make its own well-tailored suit.

We are not under the illusion that the Guidelines and the measures conducive to the implementation of the Economic Model will by themselves provide a universal remedy to all our evils. It will be required to simultaneously build a greater political awareness and common sense, and to be more intransigent with the lack of discipline and the violations committed by all, but primarily by the leading cadres.

This became all too evident a few months back in the flaws observed during the implementation of some specific measures – neither complex nor of great magnitude– due to bureaucratic obstacles and the lack of preparation of the local governments for the expansion of self-employment.

It is worthwhile reiterating that our cadres must get used to working with the guiding documents issued by the institutions empowered to do so and abandon the irresponsible habit of putting

them on ice. Life teaches that it is not enough to issue a good regulation, whether a law or simply a resolution. It is necessary to also train those in charge of its implementation, to monitor them and to check their practical knowledge of the issue. Let's not forget that the worst law is that which is not enforced or respected.

The system of Party schools at the provincial and national level, along with the unavoidable reorientation of their syllabus, will play a protagonist role in the preparation and continuous recycling in these subjects of Party and government cadres as well as the company executives with the aid of the educational institutions specialized in this area of knowledge and the valuable input of the members of the National Association of Economists and Accountants, as it was the case with the discussion of the Guidelines.

At the same time, and with the purpose of effectively arranging in order of importance the introduction of the required changes, *the Political Bureau agreed to bring to the Congress the proposal of establishing of a Standing Government Commission for Implementation and Development, subordinated to the President of the Council of State and Ministers which, without affecting in any way the powers invested in the corresponding Central Government Organs, will be responsible for monitoring, checking and coordinating the actions of everyone involved in this activity, and for proposing the insertion of new guidelines, something that will be indispensable in the future.*

In this token, we feel it is advisable to remember the orientation included by comrade Fidel in his Central Report to the First Party Congress, nearly 36 years ago, about the Economy Management System that we intended to introduce back then and failed due to our lack of systematization, control and discipline. He said "...that the Party leaders but foremost the State leaders turn its implementation into a personal undertaking and a matter of honor as they grow more aware of its crucial importance and the need to make every effort to apply it consistently, always under the leadership of the National Commission created to that end...", and he concluded: "...to widely disseminate information on the system, its principles and mechanisms through a kind of literature within reach of the masses so that the workers can master the issue. The success of the system will largely depend on the workers knowledge of the issue."

I will not tire of repeating that in this Revolution everything has

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been said. The best example of this we have in Fidel's ideas that Granma, the Official Party organ, has been running in the past few years.

Whatever we approve in this Congress cannot suffer the same fate as the previous agreements, most of them forgotten and unfulfilled. Whatever it is that we agree upon in this or future meetings must guide the behavior and action of Party members and leaders alike and its materialization must be ensured through the corresponding legal instruments produced by the National Assembly of People's Power, the State Council or the Government, in accordance with their legislative powers and the Constitution.

It's only fair to say very clearly, in order to avoid misinterpretations, that the agreements reached by congresses and other leading Party organs do not become law in themselves. They are orientations of a political and moral nature, and it is incumbent on the Government, which is the body in charge of management, to regulate their implementation.

This is why the Standing Commission for Implementation and Development will include a Judicial Subgroup made up by highly qualified specialists who will coordinate with the corresponding organs –with full respect for institutionalization— the legal amendments required to accompany the updating of the Economic and Social Model, simplifying and harmonizing the content of hundreds of ministerial resolutions, legislative decrees and legislations, and subsequently proposing, in due course, the introduction of the relevant adjustments to the Constitution of the Republic.

*Without waiting to have everything worked out, progress has been made in the legal regulations associated with the purchase and sale of housing and cars, the modification of Legislative Decree No. 259 expanding the limits of fallow land to be awarded in usufruct to those agricultural producers with outstanding results and the granting of credits to self-employed workers and to the population at large.*

Likewise, we consider it advisable to propose to this Congress that the first point of the agenda of every plenary meeting of the next Central Committee, to be held no less than twice a year, is a report on the status of the implementation of the agreements adopted in this Congress on the updating of the Economic Model, and that the second

point is an analysis on the fulfillment of the economic plan, be it from the first semester or from the running year.

We also recommend the National Assembly of People's Power to proceed in the same way during its ordinary sessions with the purpose of strengthening its protagonist role as the supreme organ of the State power.

Starting from the deep conviction that nothing that we do is perfect and that even if it seems so today it will not be tomorrow under new circumstances, the higher organs of the Party and the State and Government Powers should keep a systematic and close oversight on this process and be ready to timely introduce any adjustments called for to correct negative effects.

Comrades,

Another crucial issue very closely related to the updating of the Economic and Social Model of the country and that should help in its materialization is the celebration of a National Party Conference. This will reach conclusions on the modification of the Party working methods and style with a view to ensure, for today and for the future, the consistent application of article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic setting forth that the Party is the organized vanguard of the Cuban nation and the top leading force of the society and the State.

Initially, we had planned to call that Conference for December 2011; however, given the complications inherent to the last month of the year and the advisability of having a prudent reserve of time to adjust details, we are planning to hold that meeting at the end of January 2012.

Last December 18, I explained to the Parliament that due to the inefficiency of the Government Organs in the discharge of their functions, the Party had spent years involved in undertakings that were not its responsibility, and compromised and limited its role.

We are convinced that the only thing that can make the Revolution and Socialism fail in Cuba, risking the future of our nation, is our inability to overcome the mistakes we have been making for more than five decades and the new ones we could make.

The first thing we should do to correct a mistake is to consciously

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admit it in its full dimension but the fact is that, although from the early years of the Revolution Fidel made a clear distinction between the roles of the Party and the State, we were inconsistent in the follow-up of his instructions and simply improvised under the pressure of emergencies.

There can be no better example than what the leader of the Revolution said as early as March 26, 1962, by radio and television, explaining to the people the methods and functioning of the Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (ORI), which preceded the Party. He said: "...the Party leads, it leads through the entire Party and it leads through the public administration. An official must have authority. A minister must have authority; a manager must have authority and discuss as much as necessary with the Advising Technical Council (today, the Board of Directors), discuss with the working masses, discuss with the Party cell, but it is the manager who makes the decision, because it is his responsibility..." This orientation dates back 49 years.

There are very well defined concepts that, in substance, remain completely valid regardless of the time that has passed since Lenin formulated them, almost 100 years ago, and they should be taken up again, bearing in mind the characteristics and experiences of our country.

In 1973, during the preparations of the First Party Congress, it was defined that the Party must lead and supervise with its own ways and means, which are different from the ways, means and resources available to the State for exercising its authority. The Party's guidelines, resolutions and provisions are not legally binding for all citizens; it is the Party members who should abide by them as their conscience dictates since there is no apparatus to force or coerce them into complying. This is a major difference about the role and methods of the Party and the State.

The fortitude of the Party basically lies in its moral authority, its influence on the masses and the trust of the people. The action of the Party is based, above all, on the honesty of its motives and the justice of its political line.

The fortitude of the State lies in its material authority, which consists of the strength of the institutions responsible for demanding from everyone to comply with the legal regulations it enacts.

The damage caused by the confusion of these two concepts is manifested, firstly, in the deterioration of the Party's political work and, secondly, in the decline of the authority of the State and the Government as the officials cease feeling responsible for their decisions.

Comrades,

The idea is to forever relieve the Party of activities completely alien to its nature as a political organization; in short, to get rid of managing activities and to have each one do what they are meant to do.

These misconceptions are closely linked to the flaws of the Party's policy with the cadres, which will also be analyzed by the abovementioned National Conference. More than a few bitter lessons are the legacy of the mistakes made in this area due to the lack of rigorous criteria and vision which opened the way to the hasty promotion of inexperienced and immature cadres, pretending otherwise through simulation and opportunism, attitudes fostered by the wrong idea that an unspoken premise to occupy a leading position was to be a member of the Party or the Young Communist League.

We must decidedly abandon such practice and leave it only for responsibilities in the political organizations. Membership in a political organization should not be a precondition for holding a leading position with the State or the Government. What the cadres need are adequate training and the willingness to recognize as their own the Party policy and program.

The true leaders do simply not crop up in schools or from favoritism; they are forged at the grassroots level, working in the profession they studied in contact with the workers and rising gradually to leadership by setting an example in terms of sacrifices and results.

In this regard, I think that the Party leadership, at all levels, should be self-critical and adopt the necessary measures to prevent the reemergence of such tendencies. This is also applicable to the lack of systematic work and political will to secure the promotion of women, black people and people of mixed race, and youths to decision-making

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positions on the basis of their merits and personal qualifications.

It's really embarrassing that we have not solved this problem in more than half a century. This shall weight heavily on our consciences for many years because we have simply been inconsistent with the countless orientations given by Fidel from the early days of the revolutionary victory and throughout the years, and also because the solution to this disproportion was contained in the agreements adopted by the transcendental First Party Congress and the four congresses that followed. Still, we have failed to ensure its realization.

The solution of such issues that define the future will never again be left to spontaneity but rather to foresight and to the unwavering political intention of preserving and perfecting socialism in Cuba.

Although we kept on trying to promote young people to senior positions, life proved that we did not always make the best choice. Today, we are faced with the consequences of not having a reserve of well-trained replacements with sufficient experience and maturity to undertake the new and complex leadership responsibilities in the Party, the State and the Government, a problem we should solve gradually, in the course of five years, avoiding hasty actions and improvisations but starting as soon as the Congress is over.

This will advance further with the strengthening of the democratic spirit and collective work of the leading Party, State and Government organs as we guarantee the systematic rejuvenation of all of the Party and management positions, from the grassroots to the comrades with the highest responsibilities, including the current President of the Council of State and Ministers and the First Secretary of the Central Committee elected in this Congress.

*In this regard, we have reached the conclusion that it is advisable to recommend limiting the time of service in high political and State positions to a maximum of two five-year terms.* This is possible and necessary under the present circumstances, quite different from those prevailing in the first decades of the Revolution that was not yet consolidated when it had already become the target of continuous threats and aggressions.

The systematic strengthening of our institutions will be both a premise and an indispensable guarantee to prevent this cadre renovation policy from ever jeopardizing the continuation of Socialism in Cuba.



*The first step we are taking in this direction is the substantial reduction of the list of leading positions that required approval from the municipal, provincial and national levels of the Party while empowering senior leaders in the ministries and companies to appoint, replace and apply disciplinary measures to a large part of their subordinated cadres with the assistance of the corresponding Cadres Commissions, where the Party is represented and has a voice but which are presided by the manager who makes the final decision.* The view of the Party organization is appreciated but the single determining element is the manager, and we should preserve and enhance their authority in harmony with the Party.

As to the internal functioning of the Party, which will also be examined at the National Conference, we think it is worthwhile reflecting on the self-defeating effects of old habits completely alien to the Party's vanguard role in our society. These include the superficiality and excessive formality characterizing the political-ideological work; the use of obsolete methods and terminology that ignore the instruction level of the Party members; holding excessively long meetings and often during working hours –which should be sacred, especially for the communists– sometimes with inflexible agendas dictated by the higher level in disregard of the context where the Party members develop their activities; the frequent calls to formal commemorations where still more formal speeches are made; and, the organization of voluntary works on holydays without a real content or adequate coordination that cause spending and have an upsetting and discouraging effect on our comrades.

These criteria also apply to emulation, a movement that lost through the years its capacity to mobilize the workers' collectives and became an alternative mechanism for distribution of moral and material incentives not always justified with concrete results, and in more than a few occasions gave rise to fraudulent information.

Additionally, the Conference will analyze the Party's relations with the Young Communist League and the mass organizations to break with routine and schematic approaches and to allow each of them to recover their *raison d'être* under the present conditions.

To sum up, comrades, the National Conference will focus on

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enhancing the role of the Party as the main advocate of the interests of the Cuban people.

With respect to the international situation, we shall use a few minutes to assess the predicament of the world at this point in time.

There is no end in sight to the global economic crisis affecting every nation because it is a systemic crisis. The powerful have directed their remedies to protecting the institutions and procedures that originated it and to depositing the terrible burden of its consequences on the workers of their own countries, and particularly of the underdeveloped countries. Meanwhile, the climbing prices of foods and oil are pushing hundreds of millions of people into destitute poverty.

The effects of climate change are already devastating and the lack of political will of the industrial nations prevents the adoption of urgent and indispensable action to avoid the catastrophe.

We live in a convulsive world where natural disasters follow one another like the earthquakes in Haiti, Chile and Japan while the United States wages wars of conquest in Iraq and Afghanistan that have taken the lives of more than one million civilians.

Popular movements in Arab nations are uprising against corrupted and oppressive governments allied with the United States and the European Union. The unfortunate conflict in Libya, a nation subjected to a brutal military intervention by NATO, has given that organization a new pretext to go beyond its originally defensive limits and expand worldwide the threats and war actions undertaken to safeguard its geostrategic interests and access to petroleum. Likewise, imperialism and the domestic reactionary forces connive to destabilize other countries while Israel oppresses and massacres the Palestinian people with complete impunity.

The United States and NATO include in their doctrines the aggressive interventionism against the Third World countries aimed at plundering their resources. They also impose to the United Nations a double standard and use the media consortia in an increasingly coordinated way to conceal or distort the events, as it befits the world power centers, in a hypocritical mockery intended to deceive the public opinion.

Despite its complex economic situation, our country maintains its cooperation with 101 Third World nations. In Haiti, after 12 years

of intensive work saving lives, the Cuban healthcare personnel have been working with admirable generosity, since January 2010, alongside collaborators from other countries facing the situation created by the earthquake and the cholera epidemic that ensued.

To the Bolivarian Revolution, and to comrade Hugo Chávez Frías, we express our resolute solidarity and commitment, conscious of the significance of the process undertaken by the fraternal Venezuelan people for Our America, in the Bicentennial of its Independence.

We also share the hopes of the transformation movements in various Latin American countries, headed by prestigious leaders who represent the interests of the oppressed majorities.

We shall continue helping the integrationist processes of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), the South Union (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CLACS) currently involved in arrangements for the celebration of its foundational summit on July this year, in Caracas. The establishment of this entity was the most extraordinary institutional event in our hemisphere during the past century, since for the first time all of the countries south of the Rio Bravo were meeting on our own.

We are encouraged by this increasingly united and independent Latin America and the Caribbean, whose solidarity we appreciate.

We shall continue advocating International Law and supporting the principle of sovereign equality among the States as well as the right of the peoples to self-determination. We reject the use of force and aggression, the wars of conquest, the plundering of the natural resources and the exploitation of man.

We condemn every form of terrorism, particularly State terrorism. We shall defend peace and development for all peoples and fight for the future of humanity.

The US Administration has not changed its traditional policy aimed at discrediting and ousting the Revolution. On the contrary, it has continued to fund projects designed to directly promote subversion, foster destabilization and interfere in our domestic affairs. The current administration has taken some positive but extremely limited actions.

The US economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba remains in force and intensifies under the current

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administration, particularly with respect to financial transactions. It ignores the almost unanimous condemnation of the blockade by the international community that for 19 consecutive years has advocated its removal.

The United States fostered terrorism in the cities, and that same year, before the Playa Girón attack, promoted the establishment of counterrevolutionary armed-gangs, supplied by air and sea, that robbed and murdered peasants, workers and young teachers, until they were finally annihilated in 1965.

In Cuba, we will never forget the 3,478 dead and 2,099 incapacitated by the policy of State terrorism.

Half a century of hardships and suffering have gone by in which our people have put up a resistance and defended their Revolution, unwilling to surrender or to besmirch the memory of the fallen in the past 150 years, from the onset of our struggles for independence.

The US government has not ceased to give sanctuary and to protect notorious terrorists while extending the suffering and unfair incarceration of the heroic Cuban Five antiterrorist fighters.

Its Cuba policy lacks credibility and moral basis. In order to justify it, baseless pretexts are used, which grow obsolete and then change depending on Washington's interests.

The US government should not have doubts that the Cuban Revolution will be stronger after this Congress. If they want to cling on to their policy of hostility, blockade and subversion we are prepared to continue to face it.

We reiterate our willingness to engage in a dialogue and to take on the challenge of having normal relations with the United States as well as to coexist in a civilized manner, our differences notwithstanding, on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs.

At the same time, we will permanently give a priority to defense, following Fidel's instructions as expressed in his Central Report to the First Congress, when he said: "While imperialism exists, the Party, the State and the people will pay utmost attention to defense. The revolutionary guard will never be careless. History teaches with too much eloquence that those who forget this principle do not survive the mistake."

*The Revolutionary Armed Forces, or put another way, the people in uniform shall continue to constantly improve and preserve the authority*

*and prestige earned with their discipline and order in the defense of the people and of Socialism.*

We shall now deal with another no less significant issue of our times.

The Party must be convinced that beyond material needs and cultural interests our people hold a diversity of concepts and ideas about their own spiritual necessities.

Our National Hero José Martí, a man who synthesized that convergence of spirituality and revolutionary sentiments, wrote many pages about this subject.

Fidel addressed this topic quite early, in 1954, when still in jail he evoked Renato Guitart, one of the martyrs of the Moncada: "Physical life is ephemeral; it inexorably passes; the same as many and many generations of men have passed, as our own lives will shortly pass. This truth should teach every human being that the immortal values of the spirit stand above them. What is the meaning of life without the spirit? What is life then? How can death take those that understand this and still generously sacrifice their lives to good and justice!"

These values have always been present in his ideas, and so he insisted on them in 1971, at a meeting with catholic priests in Santiago de Chile: "I tell you that there are ten thousand times more coincidences of Christianity with Communism than there might be with Capitalism."

And, he returned to this idea as he addressed the members of the Christian churches in Jamaica in 1977. He said: "We must work together so that when the political idea succeeds the religious idea is not separate and does not appear as the enemy of changes. There are no contradictions between the purposes of religion and the purposes of socialism."

The unity of the revolutionary doctrine and ideas with regards to faith and its followers is rooted in the basis of the nation, which in asserting its secular nature promoted as an unwavering principle the unity of the spirituality with the Homeland bequeathed by Father Felix Varela and the teachings of Luz y Caballero, who categorically said: "I would chose to see the fall of not only the institutions created by man—kings and emperors—but even the stars from the firmament rather than see falling from the human breast the sentiment of justice; that sun of the moral world."

In 1991, the 4th Party Congress agreed to modify the

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interpretation of the statutes that limited the admission to our organization of revolutionaries with religious beliefs.

The justice of this decision has been confirmed by the role of leaders and representatives of various religious institutions in the different facets of the national life, including the struggle for the return to our Homeland of the child Elián, in which the Cuba Council of Churches played a particularly outstanding role.

However, it is necessary to continue eradicating any prejudice that prevents bringing all Cubans together, like brothers and sisters, in virtue and in the defense of our Revolution, be them believers or not, members of Christian churches; including the Catholic Church, the Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches, the evangelicals and protestant churches; the same as the Cuban religions originated in Africa, the Spiritualist, Jewish, Islamic and Buddhist communities, and fraternal associations, among others. The Revolution has had gestures of appreciation and concord with each of them.

We have patiently endured the implacable smear campaigns on human rights, coordinated from the United States and some countries of the European Union that demand from us no less than unconditional surrender and the immediate dismantling of our socialist regime while encouraging, orienting and assisting the domestic mercenaries to break the law.

In this regard, it is necessary to make clear that we will never deny our people the right to defend their Revolution. The defense of the independence, of the conquests of Socialism and of our streets and plazas will still be the first duty of every Cuban patriot.

Days and years of intensive work and great responsibilities lie before us to preserve and develop, on solid and sustainable basis, the independent and socialist future of our Homeland.