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of the Republic at the closing of
the Second Ordinary Session of
the National Assembly of People's
Power*

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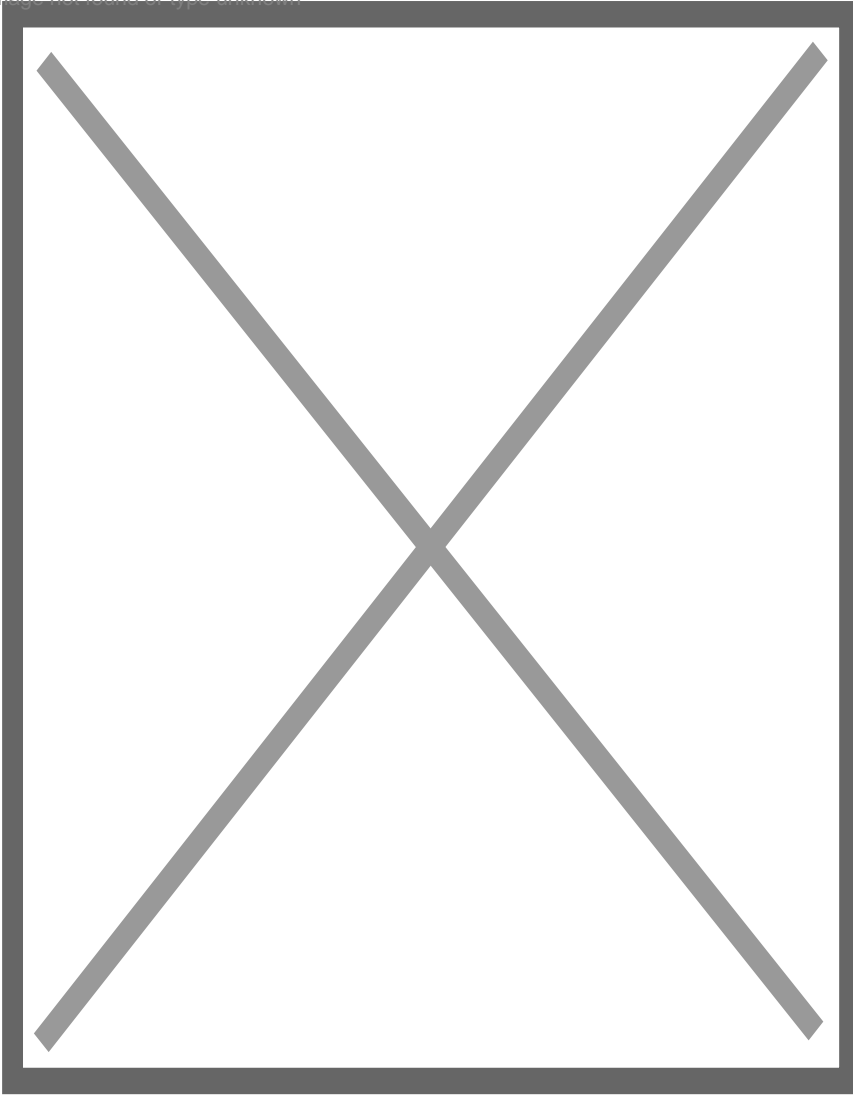


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Speech delivered by the President of the Republic at the closing of the Second Ordinary Session of the National Assembly of People's Power

Speech delivered by Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Republic, at the closing of the Second Ordinary Period of Sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power in its 10th Legislature, at the Convention Palace, on December 22, 2023, "Year 65 of the Revolution."

Dear Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, leader of the Cuban Revolution;

Dear Comrade Lazo, President of the National Assembly of People's Power;

Dear deputies:

This last Assembly session of 2023 can mark the beginning of a new trend in the behavior of the Cuban economy. Correcting deep distortions and structural deviations that hinder economic performance is a word of order to overcome the extremely complex situation we are facing today due to the combined impacts of the U.S. encirclement, the crisis in international economic relations and our own mistakes. Once again, everything will depend on our ability to adequately execute and implement the measures set forth herein.

We have called it a war economy, because it must operate in a scenario of a policy of maximum asphyxiation, designed and applied against a small country by the most powerful empire in history.

We are, in addition, a nation of the depleted Third World, a territory at a historical disadvantage as a legacy of colonialism, where a long and multifaceted world crisis is having the greatest impact, aggravated by conflicts, wars and imbalances inherent to the inequality generated by neoliberal capitalism and which deepened the recent pandemic.

I call the attention of those who prefer that we avoid the term "blockade". If only it were as easy to remove it from our daily lives and erase its threats and its effects on Cuban society. To do so would be tantamount to acting like those who today pretend to deny the Israeli genocide in Gaza, while Zionist bombs fall on neighborhoods, schools and hospitals, with the criminal purpose of exterminating their people.

As I said at the 7th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Party, the economic asphyxiation measures of the last few years are bombs aimed at bringing down the columns that support the Cuban resistance. It is therefore important that we find ways and means to prevent them from exploding.

It does not seem that the hostility of the neighboring empire will change in 2024. In its never abandoned determination to destroy the Revolution and achieve "regime change", the United States allows and favors actions of destabilization, discrediting and media warfare, which seek to encourage a social explosion.

Threats of terrorist acts are even reactivated, which the authorities pretend not to see or recognize. As if it were possible to ignore that from U.S. territory, training is facilitated and financed, with logistical support, to armed groups that overflow messages of violence by all means at their disposal.

Today we wish to reiterate here that the determination to confront them is firm and that the information we have disclosed in recent days is part of the alert.

History records numerous acts and crimes perpetrated by elements linked to the extreme right in Miami, in which the participation of U.S. agencies has not been ruled out.

The encouragement and materialization of terrorist plans against Cuba are based on the feeling of impunity that prevails in these sectors. There are the cases of Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, who, despite the public acknowledgement of their crimes, which is even recorded in declassified documents and in interviews granted to important U.S. media, quietly ended their lives in Miami, under the protection of the U.S. authorities.

There is no correspondence, but incoherence in the discourse and commitment advocated by the United States in its fight against terrorism, and the permissive action it maintains towards people of Cuban origin who from U.S. territory encourage, plan, finance, organize and carry out violent plans against Cuba and its diplomatic offices, even in our headquarters, located very close to the White House.

We demand that the U.S. authorities investigate and take measures, that they take justice against elements who profess terrorism and violent actions, who have not ceased to apply these methods in the midst of the tightening of the blockade.

The encouragement represented by the U.S. policy for the commission of violent actions against Cuba is not absurd; on the contrary, it has been recurrent in the bilateral context and is a pattern of conduct proven by history.

As Fidel said in 1998, in a moving and unforgettable act of homage to the victims of the attack on a Cubana airliner off the coast of Barbados: "What those who commit great crimes against peoples in the drunkenness of their impunity and the ephemeral nature of their power can never imagine is that the truth always breaks through sooner or later".

Three years of a Democratic administration acting in total adherence to its Republican predecessor confirms that hostility against Cuba is not party-based, but a policy rooted in the hegemonic pretension of an empire incapable of accepting the sovereignty of its small neighbor.

Should anyone have any doubts, it is enough to read the provisions of Title II of the Helms-Burton Act which, among other aspects, establishes the permanence of the economic blockade until the revolutionary government is overthrown, the Communist Party of Cuba, the political and mass organizations disappear and the properties are returned or compensation has been received by all those who once owned property in Cuba.

It also establishes that, during the period between the overthrow of the revolutionary power and the return of the properties, there will be in Cuba a transitional government selected and imposed by the U.S. Government that will certify whether the provisions of this perverse law have been complied with.

In spite of these irrefutable evidences of absolute imperial arrogance, there is no lack of those willing to demand or suggest that Cuba offer gestures or concessions to "help" the U.S. Government to assume a more benevolent and constructive behavior.

They are often unaware of or simply do not want to hear about the impact of the blockade. Some do not even mention it as the central aspect of the conflict between the two countries and the impediments it imposes on our development.

More than thirty consecutive times the majority of the governments of the world have supported, by means of a vote before the United Nations General Assembly, the Cuban Resolution against the blockade.

Imperial arrogance scorns this global support, turns its face away from the world demand and maintains its criminal policy, which it justifies from a discursive construction of double standards, lying and slanderous which, behind a false concern and commitment to the problems of the Cuban people, hides its real purposes of destroying the Revolution at any cost.

With the solidarity and understanding of a significant part of the international community, Cuba is facing the impacts of the blockade.

Today it is up to us to face the concurrence of these problems with the aftermath of the pandemic and the global crisis. We shall do so with determination and firmness, with intelligence and integrity, with optimism and confidence, sharing efforts and contributions among all of us, in the midst of an adverse context, but confident that we shall overcome the challenges with hard work, talent and creativity, that is, with creative resistance (Applause).

Like Monterroso's dinosaur, the blockade will continue to be there, now a thousand times stronger, stopping our dreams, putting obstacles in our way, preventing development and the prosperity we deserve, because the United States Government continues to be weighed down by the lack of political will to move towards a relationship with Cuba that is respectful and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and International Law. The effort is to cut off access to capital and financing, to asphyxiate

the economy and thus mutilate the Government's capacity to respond to the fundamental needs of the population.

The effect of this policy is visible in the depression of several essential services, including electricity, health, education, water supply, community services, public transportation, food and medicine production, all of which require the importation of equipment, parts, fuel or raw materials, for which the scarce financial resources available are not enough.

Even if the economic management of the State were the most efficient and effective in the world, which no government can boast of, many of our problems would persist because of the blockade, as expressed in the contraction of supplies for the consumption of the population, the level of inflation and the insufficient purchasing power of the majority of the people. This is the objective of the economic war, and the results are clearly materializing, although they fall short of the goal set by imperialism since the triumph of the Revolution.

Together with the constant actions of subversion and disinformation against Cuba, the goal is to break the country, provoke social decomposition and generate ungovernability, a purpose in which they have failed resoundingly.

My fellow compatriots,

During the debates of these days, there has been critical and self-critical talk about the mistakes made. These mistakes are also part of the complexity of decision making in a context of extreme tensions.

In a sort of perfect storm, the desire to overcome the adverse situation, the correlation between the economic variables, the commitment to preserve the social conquests and the very little and sometimes null availability of foreign currency converge very frequently. All this has been a breeding ground for the taking of non-integral decisions, which cause logical misunderstandings and negative impacts due to their application in unfavorable conditions, which many consider to be the cause of all the problems, without really being the only ones and not even the most determining ones.

During these days we have talked about efforts that have not yet translated into solutions, about measures that did not bear fruit, about forecasts that did not come true.

Just as we recognize errors in the design of the Ordinance Task and its inadequate implementation, we have questioned the approval of new economic actors without the precision of the rules of action, which could have avoided numerous deviations.

It is also important to point out that the lack of control and defense of the rules that are approved and the inadequate functioning of state entities responsible for executing them have reinforced the errors. It is now necessary to advance in the gradual rectification.

The coincidence of these problems and their accumulation over time have facilitated the presence of negative phenomena and manifestations in Cuban society that we do not want.

Once again it is time to rectify. Rectification is a process inherent to the Revolution.

From the ideology and actions of Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz and Army General Raúl Castro Ruz we learned the importance of timely correction in any situation that could compromise the future of socialist construction.

This is a thought that has been consolidated for several years. In 1986, the Commander in Chief had promoted a profound process of rectification of errors and negative tendencies, which could not be concluded due to the beginning of the Special Period, when the country had to focus on facing that

difficult stage in order to save the achievements of the Revolution and socialism.

In the year 2000, Fidel himself urged us to change everything that should be changed, with a sense of the historical moment, and five years later, in 2005, from the University of Havana, he warned that we could destroy the Revolution ourselves if we did not correct the mistakes and deviations.

For his part, Army General Raúl Castro Ruz has also made important calls of attention to distortions that have manifested themselves in our process. His references to the fight against corruption, bungling and social indisciplines acquire absolute validity in the current circumstances.

My fellow compatriots:

We are being protagonists and witnesses of crucial decisions. The most relevant issues for the present and the future of the nation have been addressed here.

The debates of this session of the National Assembly have plunged into the depths of the country's problems, considering the possible ways out and solutions to the current situation.

The effectiveness of the measures that we must implement in the year 2024 to advance more rapidly in the economic recovery depends on how much we do to generate more wealth, with incentives to work and a more adequate distribution of resources. The success of its implementation will also depend on the progress in the elimination of the main distortions that today compromise the possibilities of economic growth and development of the country in the short, medium and long term.

No single measure solves all the challenges, and even all of them as a whole may, at first, increase certain problems.

The challenge is to apply them in an organized manner, evaluating their impacts, adjusting the process systematically and taking care of the differentiated treatment for those who may be most affected, that is, individuals and families in vulnerable situations, children, adolescents and young people, women and the elderly, together with pensioners and retirees.

These and other decisions that will surely derive from the current ones, should be ordering, in the medium term, the macroeconomic indicators and place the country in a more favorable situation for us to move forward in the year 2024 opening doors to the hope and prosperity that we owe ourselves.

I have heard and read in social networks opinions of all kinds about measures that have barely been outlined. This is understandable. These are complex decisions, as complex is the moment. In the coming days, more extensive and detailed explanations will be given in this regard in our media and platforms. But I emphatically state that there is no neoliberal package against the people, nor a crusade against MSMEs or the elimination of the basic food basket, as the counterrevolution is already posting on social networks (Applause).

There is no lack of those who think that New Year's Eve is only for good news. Nothing would make us happier than to announce that salaries are being raised and that we will have enough foreign currency and fuel to put an end to the burden caused by shortages. Unfortunately, we all know that this is not possible.

This Revolution began by telling the people, in the hour of greatest celebration and joy, the following: "The joy is immense. And yet, there is still much to be done. Let us not delude ourselves into believing that in the future everything will be easy; perhaps in the future everything will be more difficult."

Those are Fidel's words in the first hours of the revolutionary triumph in 1959. That is how we have acted in the 65 years that have passed, and that is how we, the continuators of the Revolution, will act! (Applause).

We are aware of the seriousness of the economic situation and that in order to solve it, it is necessary to act. Bad, very bad news would be to remain paralyzed or to insist on following a path that has proven to be impracticable because it is unsustainable.

Felix Martinez did well to recall here a warning by the Army General in a session of the National Assembly of People's Power in December 2010 when he expressed: "Although we have had the Marxist-Leninist theoretical legacy, where the feasibility of socialism is scientifically proven and the practical experience of the attempts of its construction in other countries, the building of the new society in the economic order is, in my modest opinion, also a journey towards the unknown -towards the unknown-, for which reason each step must be deeply meditated and planned before the next one, where the mistakes are corrected timely and quickly so as not to leave the solution to time, which will increase them and in the end will pass the bill to us even more costly".

The leadership of the Party and the Government, from the municipalities to the nation, have approached the issue with sincerity, transparency and a clear sense of responsibility. Here we heard the Prime Minister expressing dissatisfaction because what was planned was not achieved and measures and decisions that were taken earlier have not yielded positive results.

We can attest to the expressed will of the Government to preserve the highest possible degree of social justice and our commitment always and forever with the Cuban people (Applause).

Undoubtedly, some things could have been done earlier. But in a socialist system, in a country like ours with an intensified blockade, in a planned economy and in a democracy with the participation of the people, decisions require a level of consensus and maturity to be implemented.

The country has a State with a high level of responsibility which it does not deny. This Government proposes, informs, consults and expects its deputies and all the people to support it in the implementation of decisions that can lead us to the quickest way out of the current complex situation.

In the conception and design of these decisions, Party and government executives and officials have participated, supported by scholars, academics, experts, university professors, and popular opinion has also been taken into account with respect to everything that should be changed.

The gradual elimination of some subsidies and the changes in the fiscal policy, among others, are aimed at correcting unsustainable deviations and distortions in the current conditions of the economy. They are adjustments that will allow a necessary and better use of the meager financial resources available.

Members of Congress:

Based on personal and collective effort, looking inward and developing ourselves as a result of work, growth in activity levels that are decisive for the country are projected for the year 2024, although still insufficient to meet the demand.

It will be essential to demand the fulfillment of the functions of state institutions in all areas and the work organized from the communities and municipalities.

Special attention must be paid to food production, to solve the territorial needs of each locality, to recover tourism, to stop the fall in the sugar industry, to take control of foreign currency and the exchange market by the State and to reorganize the financial system, guaranteeing levels of self-financing and management of foreign currency to those who generate it.

As for the socialist state enterprises, progress must be made with greater speed in essential transformations aimed at gradually modifying the mechanisms of resource allocation and the institutional scheme in which they operate, with the objective of advancing in their real autonomy, recovering the

levels of efficiency of the main economic activities and achieving their sustainable development, as well as their effective linkage with the non-state sector.

The entrepreneurial system must be willing to do everything possible to stimulate the production of goods and services that allow for the expansion of the supply, making adequate use of the powers that have been granted to it. The people expect Cuban entrepreneurs to bet everything on their country.

It is also important to develop state-owned MSMEs, conceived as more flexible and dynamic structures with greater capacity to adapt to current challenges.

With regard to non-state management, I would like to recall that they are part of the business sector of the economic and social model endorsed in the Constitution of the Republic. In this sense, they must be provided with the conditions to contribute, as foreseen, to the economic and social development of the country.

We ratify once again that the public policies of the State and the Government are mandatory for all sectors, and that we will resolutely confront the enemy's attempt to fracture the unity and turn the non-State sector of the economy against the Revolution.

In order to successfully confront these pretensions, clear, coherent rules are needed, adjusted to the objectives of all economic actors, in order to avoid distortions and negative tendencies.

I will not dwell any further on these issues, because they have already been amply developed by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Economy. It is up to us now to create the conditions for the implementation of the decisions, explaining, arguing and above all taking care that each one serves the higher purpose of overcoming the country's economic difficulties.

Comrades:

I would now like to point to progress in the legislative exercise. In this sense, the agenda of this Assembly Session has been fruitful. We have passed three important laws in compliance with the schedule and to implement constitutional contents.

I especially emphasize the new Public Health Law, which ratifies the principle of One Health, and the responsibility of the State to guarantee its access, as well as the free care, protection and recovery services provided.

This normative provision updates the functioning of the Cuban Health System, based on the advances in science and innovation in this strategic social sector.

The Law comprehensively develops the contents of the rights set forth in the Constitution, by recognizing human dignity as the supreme value, as well as the right to life, physical and moral integrity, freedom, justice, among others. It also recognizes the responsibility of society and families in the enjoyment of these fundamental rights.

It has also been approved, and for the first time in the Cuban legal system, the Law of the System of Attention to the Complaints and Petitions of the People. This regulation also develops constitutional postulates. And although by itself it will not solve the problems and dissatisfactions of the population, it undoubtedly streamlines, perfects and institutionalizes this activity with better guarantees for the citizens.

As for the Military Prosecutor's Office Law, it complements what has already been established in the organization of the Attorney General's Office, adapts the organization, structure and operation of the Military Prosecutor's Office to the constitutional requirements and strengthens its role in the armed institutions.

With this Law, an institutional cycle of the justice system of the State organs is completed, particularly those linked to the investigation, control and exercise of criminal action.

The readjustment of the Legislative Schedule for 2024 was also approved during this session.

In the year that is coming to an end, important laws have been approved for the nation, which ratifies the will of the State to continue developing and perfecting the legislative activity, in accordance with the Constitution and the institutional strengthening of the country.

It is worth highlighting in the agenda of this Assembly the analysis of the implementation of two norms approved by this Parliament, the Family Code and the Criminal Procedure Law.

In the analysis of the Family Code, the work of social justice that this regulation contains, in a matter as relevant as the rights of all persons and for all types of families, was noted.

The work developed by the institutions in charge of its application is significant; nevertheless, it is necessary that they continue to prepare themselves for its greater effectiveness and contribute to a greater knowledge and understanding of it in society.

In the case of the Criminal Procedure Law, the assessments made indicate the need to continue studying it in order to improve it in the future, based on the experiences derived from its application.

This norm has contributed to provide better guarantees to the criminal process and has forced its operators to act accordingly, which requires from them a permanent preparation for its effective materialization.

Compatriots:

The presidency of the Group of 77 and China, which Cuba assumed since January, has demanded a great effort from our institutions and the country in general. It reflects our commitment to defend the causes of the countries of the Global South and our willingness to mobilize our energies to ensure the most effective representation of the interests of developing nations in the international arena.

It has demonstrated the authority and leadership of Cuban diplomacy, its attachment to principles, to the promotion of dialogue and cooperation and its ability to build consensus and defend the unity of developing countries in the many multilateral events that have taken place during the year.

We will continue to firmly denounce the massacre committed today by Israel, the occupying power, against the Palestinian people (Applause). I reiterate today that Cuba will never be among the indifferent; we will always defend the right to self-determination of that heroic people and to have an independent and sovereign State, with the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

To this end, the impunity guaranteed to Israel by the United States must cease! The genocide must stop! For a free Palestine, the voice of Cuba will always be raised.

The Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China held here in Havana in September reinforced the Group's voice as a key player in international discussions. The meeting confirmed the solidarity, admiration and respect for Cuba.

The recently held Summit of Leaders of the Group of 77 and China within the framework of the COP28 Conference of the Parties on Climate Change, in Dubai, confirmed that leadership with its excellent results.

This event, unprecedented in the Group's history, contributed to strengthening the role of the bloc in the climate negotiations.

On behalf of the Group, Cuba attended at the highest level the Summit meeting held in Paris to analyze monetary-financial problems, the BRICS Summit, and various meetings held in the context of the High-Level Segment of the United Nations General Assembly.

This constructive activism in foreign policy was also reflected in our participation in the peace process between the Government of Colombia and the National Liberation Army, whose Dialogue Table held one of its cycles this year in the Cuban capital.

We have continued to strengthen the ties of friendship and cooperation with the peoples and governments of different latitudes.

In spite of the effort of the United States to prevent it, which was joined by several anti-Cuban elements in Europe and the United States itself, Cuba was re-elected, with broad support, to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.

The election of Cuba, with a very large vote, to the Executive Board of UNESCO was also a great satisfaction.

The IV Conference of the Nation and Emigration was very fruitful. It ratified the permanent commitment to advance towards an ever closer, natural and integral relationship with Cubans residing in other countries.

Dear compatriots:

Before concluding, I ask for a strong applause of congratulations and recognition to Cuban educators on their day. For those who are here, who are not few, and for all those who exercised or exercise the beautiful profession of teaching, aware that they have in their hands the most transcendental and important work of society: the formation of the generations of the future.

First of all, congratulations on Educators' Day to the literacy teachers (Applause), and together with them, the grateful applause for those who have resisted, standing firm, the difficulties, shortages and even the insensitivities of those who forget that being a teacher is to be a creator. Many thanks to you who support with your work and dedication one of the fundamental columns of the work of the Revolution.

This is the Revolution! When we say this phrase, which summarizes 65 years of heroic creation, we think, first of all, of Health and Education. These are the two arms of the immense, fundamental, basic work, on which we raise against all odds, the ideal of a nation that has the human being at the center of its concerns and worries. And it will always have it, because the Revolution will always exist, because that is what it was made for!

Because the nation admires and recognizes the role and place of Health and Education workers for its present and future, they will be the first to benefit from additional payments, something the Prime Minister said in his speech.

At the gates of a transcendental commemoration: the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the triumph of the Revolution, Cuba will bid farewell to the year with the joy that not even the worst gales of nature or the empire have been able to take away from us.

We will celebrate our will to change what must be changed in order to maintain and overcome the social conquests that the Revolution turned into rights for the people.

Let us celebrate our independence, our sovereignty and our liberty! (Applause.)

This is the Revolution of Fidel, of Raul, of Ramiro, of Guillermo, of Machado, of the heroic Generation of the Centennial of the birth of the Apostle, whose ideas continue to inspire us, and it is the Revolution of all of us who are in this hall to enforce the will of the heroic, dignified and rebellious people we are honored

to represent! (Prolonged applause).

A few days ago, re-reading a speech given by the Commander in Chief to university students on the occasion of the approaching anniversary of the FEU, I found some words that could explain the mystery of this Revolution that has survived 65 years of siege and threats of all kinds, without losing its dreams and hopes for a possible better world.

Fidel said on December 20, 1982: "Revolutionaries have always been accused of wanting impossible things, of wanting utopian things. Martí was once accused of being a dreamer, and Martí replied that the dreams of today will be the laws of the future. It has generally been said that these tasks were unachievable, impossible; but in my life as a revolutionary, I can say that what is achieved is often more than dreams."

So, together let us make possible the dream of defeating the policy of persecution and encirclement of Cuba, and the ideal of prosperity for the people, which has moved Cuban revolutionaries of all times. Let us make dreams and even the impossible possible.

Thank you, General of the Army, for being with us and for always encouraging us to conquer the next goal. You, who 65 years ago entered the Moncada Barracks and surrendered your soldiers without a single shot being fired, with the undefeated morale of the new Rebel Army, have taught us many times that Yes, it is possible if we move forward united! And we will do it! (Prolonged applause.)

This is the Revolution, the undefeatable idea that all dreams are achievable!

This is the Revolution, the Revolution of its worthy Cuban people!

Then the will to work, the eagerness to advance, the willingness to improve and the deep conviction that we are going to win!

Homeland or Death!

We will win!

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/especiales/exclusivas/342881-speech-delivered-by-the-president-of-the-republic-at-the-closing-of-the-second-ordinary-session-of-the-national-assembly-of-peoples-power>



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