

Che's ideas are absolutely relevant today

—by Fidel Castro



The following speech was given on 8 October 1987 at the main ceremony marking the twentieth anniversary of Guevara's death. It was held at a newly completed electronics components factory in the city of Pinar del Río.

Nearly twenty years ago, on October 18, 1967, we met in the Plaza of the Revolution with a huge crowd to honor Compañero Ernesto Che Guevara. Those were very bitter, very difficult days as when we received news of the developments in Vado del Yeso, in the Yuro Ravine, when news agencies reported Che had fallen in battle.

It didn't take long to realize that those reports were absolutely correct, for they consisted of news items and photos that proved it beyond doubt. For several days, the news was coming until with all that information in hand — although many of the details we know today were not known at the time — we held the large mass rally, the solemn ceremony in which we paid our last respects to fallen compañero.

Nearly twenty years have passed since then, and now, on October 8, we are marking the date he fell in battle. According to reliable reports we have now, he was actually murdered the following day after having been captured unarmed and wounded; his weapon had been rendered useless in battle. That's why it has become a tradition to commemorate that dramatic event on October 8.

The first year passed and then five, ten, fifteen, now twenty years, and it was necessary to recall the historic dimensions of that development, and particularly the man. Thus in a natural way, rather than a very deliberate or pondered way, the entire people have been recalling the date in recent months. It was possible to commemorate the twentieth anniversary on a solemn note as we have seen here today: The playing of taps, the anthem, the magnificent poem by Nicolás Guillén, which rang out with the same voice we heard twenty years ago.

I could try to give a very solemn, grandiloquent speech, perhaps a written speech, but in these times the pressure of work barely leaves a minute free for thinking more carefully about all those events and the things I could say here, let alone for writing a speech — that's why I'd prefer to recall Che, share my thoughts with you, because I've thought a lot about Che.

I did an interview, part of which was made public yesterday in our country, in answer to the questions of an Italian journalist who had me in front of the television cameras nearly sixteen hours straight — actually, they were movie, not TV cameras, because in order to get a better image in everything he did, he

didn't use videocassettes, some of which last two hours, but rather movie cameras. He'd change reels every twenty or twenty-five minutes, and so it was quite an exhausting interview. We should have taken three days to do it, but we had to do it in one because there was no more time. We started before noon on a Sunday and finished at 5:00 a.m. the following day. There were more than 100 questions. Among the variety of subjects and themes, the journalist was very interested in talking about Che, and between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. we got to the subject. I made an effort to answer each of his questions, and I made a special effort to summarize my memories of Che.

I told him how I felt, and I think many compañeros feel the same way, regarding Che's permanent presence. We must keep in the special relationship with Che, the affection, the fraternal bonds of comradeship, the united struggle over nearly twelve years, from the moment we met in Mexico until the end, a period rich in historic events, some of which have been made public only in the last couple of days.

It was a period filled with heroic and glorious deeds, from the time Che joined us to go on the *Granma* expedition, the landing, the setbacks, the most difficult days, the resumption of the struggle in the mountains, rebuilding an army virtually from scratch, the first clashes, and the last battles.

Then the intense period that followed, one after another, such as the start of imperialist hostility; the blockade; the slander campaigns against the revolution as soon as we started to do justice to the criminals and thugs who had murdered thousands of our fellow citizens; the economic blockade; the Girón [Bay of Pigs] invasion; the proclamation of the socialist nature of the revolution; the struggle against the mercenaries; the October [missile] crisis; the first steps in the construction of socialism when there was nothing — neither experience nor cadres nor engineers nor economists and hardly any technicians, when we were left almost without doctors because 3,000 of the 6,000 doctors in the country left.

Then came the First and Second Declarations of Havana, the start of the isolation imposed on our country, the collective rupture of diplomatic relations by all Latin American governments except Mexico. It was a period in which, along with all these developments, we had to organize the economy of the country. It was a relatively brief but fruitful period replete with unforgettable events.

It must be kept in mind that Che persisted in an old desire, an old idea: to return to South America, to his country, to make the revolution based on the experience he'd gained in our country. We should recall the clandestine way in which his departure had to be organized, the barrage of slanders against the revolution when there was talk of conflicts, of differences with Che, that Che had disappeared. It was even said he had been murdered because of splits in the ranks of the revolution.

Meanwhile, the revolution calmly and firmly endured the ferocious attack, because over and above the irritation and the bitterness caused by those campaigns, the important thing was for Che to be able to fulfill his goals; the important thing was to ensure his safety and that of the compatriots with him on his historic missions.

In the interview I explained the origin of that idea, how when he joined us he had set only one condition: that once the revolution was made, when he wanted to return to South America he would not be prevented from doing so for reason of state or for the state's convenience, that he would not be held back. We told him he could go ahead and that we would support him. He would remind us of this pledge every so often until the time came he decided it was time to leave.

Not only did we keep the promise of agreeing to his departure, but we gave him all the help we could. We tried to delay the departure a little. We gave him other tasks to enrich his guerrilla experience, and we tried to create a minimum of conditions so that he would not have to go through the most difficult stage of the first days of organizing a guerrilla force, something we knew full well from our own experience.

We were well aware of Che's talent, his experience and his role. He was a cadre suited to major strategic tasks and we felt it might be better if other compañeros undertook the initial organizational work and that he join at a more advanced stage in the process. This also fit in with our policy during the war of saving cadres, as they distinguished themselves, for increasingly important and strategic assignments. We did not have many experienced cadres, and as they distinguished themselves we would not send them out every day with a squad to ambush; rather, we gave them more important tasks in keeping with their ability and experience.

Thus, I remember that during the days of Batista's final offensive in the Sierra Maestra mountains against our militant but small forces, the most experienced cadres were not in the front lines; they were assigned strategic leadership assignments and save for our devastating counterattack. It would have been pointless to put Che, Camilo [Cienfuegos], and other compañeros who had participated in many battles at the head of a squad. We held them back so that they could subsequently lead columns that would undertake risky missions of great importance, it was then that we did send them in enemy territory with full responsibility and awareness of the risks as in the case of the invasion of Las Villas led by Camilo and Che, an extraordinarily difficult assignment that required men of great experience and authority as column commanders, men capable of reaching the goal.

In line with this reasoning, and considering the objectives, perhaps it would have been better if this principle had been observed and Che had joined at a later stage. It really was no so critical for him to handle everything right from the start.

But he was impatient, very impatient really. Some Argentine comrades had been killed in the initial efforts he had made years before, including Ricardo Massetti, the founder of *Presna Latina*. He remembered that often and was really impatient to start to participate personally in the work.

As always, we respected our commitments and his views, for our relationship was always based on absolute trust, absolute brotherhood, regardless of our ideas about what would be the right time for him to join in. And so we gave him all the help and the facilities possible to start the struggle.

The news came of the first clashes, and contact was completely lost. The enemy detected the initial stage of organization of the guerrilla movement, and that marked the start of a period lasting many months in which almost the only news we received was what came via international news dispatches, and we had to know how to interpret them. But that's something our revolution had become very experienced at: determining when a report is reliable or when it is made up, false.

I remember, for example, when a dispatch came with the news of the death of Joaquín's grip (his real name was Vilo Acuña.* When we analyzed it, I immediately concluded that it was true, this was because of the way they described how the group had been eliminated while crossing a river. Because of our own guerrilla experience, because of what we had lived through, we knew how a small guerrilla group can be done away with. We knew the few, exceptional ways such a group can be destroyed,

When it was reported that a peasant had made contact with the army and provided detailed information on the location and plans of the group, which was looking for a way to cross the river; how the army set up an ambush on the other bank at a spot on the route the same peasant had told the guerrilla fighters to use; the way the army opened fire in midstream; there was no doubt as to the truth of the explanation. If the writers of false reports, which came in often, tried to do it again, it was impossible to admit that they, who were always so clumsy in their lies, would have had enough intelligence and experience to make up the exact and only circumstances in which the group could be eliminated. That's why we conclude the report was true.

* On April 17, 1967, the guerrilla unit in Bolivia was divided in two, with the main group led by Guevara and the rear guard of seventeen fighters under the command of Joaquín's (his real name was Juan Vilo Acuña). Although the separation was supposed to last only a few days, the two groups lost contact with either permanently. On August 31, the remnant of Joaquín's group fell into an ambush and was annihilated.

Long years of revolutionary experience had taught us to decipher dispatches and tell the difference between the truth and the falsehood of each development; although, of course, there are other things to keep in mind when making a judgment. But that was the type of information we had about the situation until the news of Che's death arrived.

As we have explained, we had hopes that even with only twenty men left, even in a very difficult situation, the guerrillas still had a chance. They were headed toward an area where sectors of the peasants were organized, where some good Bolivian cadres had influence, and until that moment, until almost the very end, there was chance that the movement could consolidate and could develop.

But the circumstances in which my relationship with Che were so unique — the almost unreal history of the brief but intense saga of the first year of the revolution when we were used to making the impossible possible — that is, as I explained to that journalist, one had the permanent impression that Che had not died, that he was still alive. Sine his was such an exemplary personality, so unforgettable, so familiar, it was difficult to resign oneself to the idea of his death.

Sometimes I would dream — all of us dream of things related to our lives and struggles — that I saw Che, that he returned, that we was alive. How often this happened! I told the journalist that these are feelings you seldom talk about, but they give an idea of the impact of Che's personality and also of the extraordinary degree to which he really lives on, almost as if his was a physical presence, with his ideas and deeds, with his example and all the things he created, with his continued relevance and the respect for him not only in Latin America but in Europe and all over the world.

As we predicted on October 18, twenty years ago, he became a symbol for all the oppressed, for all the exploited, for all the patriotic and democratic forces, for all the revolutionaries. He became a permanent and invincible symbol.

We feel Che's presence for all these reasons, because of the real force that he still has today which, even though twenty years have gone by, exists in the spirit of all of us, when we hear the poem, when we hear the anthem, or the bugle is sounded before a moment's silence, when we open our newspapers and see photographs of Che during different stages of his life, his image, so well known throughout the world — because it has to be said that Che not only had the virtues and all the human moral qualities to be a symbol, he also had the appearance of a symbol, the image of a symbol: his look, the frankness and strength of his look; his face, which reflects character irrepressibly determined for action, at the same time showing great intelligence and great purity — when we look at the poems that have been written, the episodes that are recounted, and the stories that are repeated, we feel the reality of Che's relevance, of his presence.

It's not strange if one feels Che's presence not only in everyday life, but even in dreams if one imagines that he is alive, that Che is in action and that he never died. In the end we must reach the conclusion that for all intents and purposes in the life of our revolution, Che never died, and the light that of what has been done, he is more alive than ever, has more influence than ever, and is a more powerful opponent of imperialism than ever.

Those who disposed of his body so that he would not become a symbol; those who, under the guidance of the methods of their imperial masters, did not want any trace to remain, have discovered that although his tomb is unmarked, there are no remains, and there is no body, nevertheless a frightening opponent of imperialism, a symbol, a force, a presence that can never be destroyed, does exist.

When they hid Che's body, they showed their weakness and their cowardice, because they also showed their fear of the example and the symbol. They did not want the exploited peasants, the workers, the students, the intellectuals, the democrats, the progressives or the patriots of this hemisphere to have a place to go to pay tribute to Che's remains. And in the world today, in which there is no specific place to go to pay tribute to Che's remains, tribute is paid to everywhere. *[Applause]*

Today tribute is not paid to Che once a year, not once every five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years; today homage is paid to Che every year every month, every day, everywhere, in a factory, in a school, in a military barracks, in a home, among children, among Pioneers. Who can count how many millions of times in these twenty years, the Pioneers have said: "Pioneers for communism, we will be like Che"! *[Applause]*

Really, there can be no superior symbol, there can be no better image, when searching for a model revolutionary man, when searching for the model communist. I say this because I have the deepest conviction — I always have had and I still have today, just the same or more so when I spoke that October 18 and I asked how we wanted our fighters, our revolutionaries, our party members, our children to be, and I said we wanted them to be like Che. Because Che is the personification, Che is the image of that new man, the image of that human being if we want to talk about a communist society; *[Applause]* if our real objective is to build, not just socialism but the higher stages of socialism, if humanity is not going to renounce the lofty and extraordinary idea of living in a communist society one day.

If we need a paradigm, a model, an example to follow, then men like Che are essential, as are men and women who imitate him, who are like him, who think like, who act like him; men and women whose conduct resembles his when it comes to doing their duty, in every little thing, every detail, every

activity; in his attitude toward work, his habit of teaching and educating by setting an example; his attitude of wanting to be first at everything, the first to volunteer for the most difficult tasks, the hardest ones, the most self-sacrificing ones; the individual who gives his body and soul to others, the person who displays true solidarity, the individual who never lets down a compañero; the simple man; the man without a flaw, who doesn't live any contradiction between what he says and what he does, between what he practices and what he preaches; a man of thought and a man of action — all of which Che symbolizes. [Applause]

For our country, it is a great honor and privilege to have had Che as a son of our people even though he wasn't born in this land. He was a son because he earned the right to consider himself and to be considered a son of our country, and it is an honor and a privilege for our people, for our country, for our country's history, for our revolution to have had among its ranks a truly exceptional man such as Che.

That's not to say that exceptional people are rare; that's not to say that amid the masses there are not hundreds, thousands, even millions of exceptional men and women. I said it once during the bitter days after Camilo disappeared. When I recounted the history of how Camilo became the man he was, I said: "Among our people there are many Camilos." I could say: "Among our peoples, among the peoples of Latin America and peoples of the world, there are many Ches."

But, why do we call them exceptional? Because in actual fact, in the world in which they lived, in the circumstances in which they lived, they had the chance and the opportunity to demonstrate all that man, with his generosity and solidarity, is capable of being. And, indeed, seldom do ideal circumstances exist in which man has the opportunity to express himself and to show everything he has inside as was the case with Che.

Of course, it's clear that there are countless men and women among the masses who, partly as a result of other people's examples and certain new values, are capable of heroism, including a kind of heroism I greatly admire: silent heroism, anonymous heroism, silent virtue, anonymous virtue. But given that it's so unusual, so rare for all the necessary circumstances to exist to produce a figure like Che — who today has become a symbol for the world, a symbol that will grow — it is a great honor and privilege that this figure was born during our revolution.

And as proof of what I said earlier about Che's presence and force today, I could ask: Is there a better date, a better anniversary than this one to remember Che with all our conviction and deep feelings of appreciation and gratitude? Is there a better moment than this particular anniversary, when we are in the middle of the rectification process?

What are we rectifying? We are rectifying all those things — and there are many — that strayed from the revolutionary spirit, from revolutionary work,

revolutionary virtue, revolutionary effort, revolutionary responsibility; all those things that strayed from the spirit of solidarity among people. We're rectifying all the shoddiness and mediocrity that is precisely the negation of Che's ideas, his revolutionary thought, his style, his spirit and his example.

I really believe, and I say it with great satisfaction, that if Che were sitting in this chair, he would feel jubilant. He would be happy about what we are doing these days, just like he would have felt very unhappy during that unstable period, that disgraceful period of building socialism in which there began to prevail a series of ideas, of mechanisms, of bad habits, which would have caused Che to feel profound and terrible bitterness. *[Applause]*

For example, voluntary work, the brainchild of Che and one of the best things he left us during his stay in our country and his part in the revolution, was steadily on the decline. It became a formality almost. It would be done on the occasion of a special date, a Sunday. People would sometimes run around and do things in a disorganized way.

The bureaucrat's view, the technocrat's view that voluntary work was neither basic nor essential gained more and more ground. The idea was that voluntary work was kind of silly, a waste of time, that problems had to be solved with overtime, and with more and more overtime, and this while the regular work-day was not even being used efficiently. We had fallen into a whole host of habits that Che would have been really appalled at.

If Che had ever been told that one day, under the Cuban revolution, there would be enterprises prepared to steal to pretend they were profitable, Che would have been appalled. Or if he'd been told of enterprises that wanted to be profitable and give out prizes and I don't know what else, bonuses, and they'd sell the materials allotted to them to build and charge as they had built whatever it was, Che would have been appalled.

And I'll tell you that this happened in the fifteen municipalities in the capital of the republic, in the fifteen enterprises responsible for house repair; and that's only one example. They'd appear as though what they'd produced was with 8,000 pesos a year, and when the chaos was done away with, it turned out they were producing 4,000 pesos worth or less. So they were not profitable. They were only profitable when they stole.

Che would have been appalled if he'd been told that enterprises existed that would cheat to fulfill and even surpass their production plan by pretending to have done January's work in December.

Che would have been appalled if he'd been told that there were enterprises that fulfilled their production plan and then distributed prizes for having fulfilled it in monetary value but not in goods produced, and that engaged in producing items

that meant more monetary value and refrained from producing others that yielded less profit, despite the fact that one item without the other was not worth anything.

Che would have been appalled if he'd been told that product norms were so slack, so weak, so immoral that on certain occasions almost all the workers fulfilled them two or three times over.

Che would have been appalled if he'd been told that money was becoming man's concerns, man's fundamental motivation. He who warned us so much against that would have been appalled. Work shifts were being shortened and millions of hours of overtime reported; the mentality of our worker was being corrupted and men were increasingly being motivated by the pesos on their minds.

Che would have been appalled for he knew that communism could never be attained by wandering down those beaten capitalist paths and to follow along those paths would mean eventually to forget all ideals of solidarity and even internationalism. To follow those paths would never develop a new man and a new society.

Che would have been appalled if he'd been told that a day would come when bonuses and more bonuses of all kinds would be paid, without these having anything to do with production.

Were he to have a group of enterprises teeming two-bit capitalists — as we call them — playing at capitalism, beginning to think and act like capitalists, forgetting about the country, the people and high standards (because high standards just didn't matter; all they cared about was the money being earned thanks to the low norms), he would have been appalled.

And were he to have seen that one day they would not just take manual work subject to [quantitative] productions norms — with a certain logic to it, like cutting cane doing many other manual and physical activities — but even intellectual work, even radio and television work, and the here even a surgeons' work was likely to be subject to norms — putting just anybody under the knife in order to double or triple his income — I can truthfully say that Che would have been appalled, because none of those paths will ever lead use to communism. On the contrary, those paths lead to all the bad habits and the alienation of capitalism.

Those paths, I repeat — and Che knew it very well — would never lead us to building real socialism, as a first and transitional stage to communism.

But I don't think Che was that naïve, an idealist, or someone out of touch with reality. Che understood and took reality into consideration. But Che believed in man. And if we don't believe in man, if we think that man is an incorrigible little animal, capable of advancing only if you feed him grass or tempt him with a

carrot or whip him with a stick — anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a revolutionary; anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a socialist; anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a communist. *[Applause]*

Our revolution is an example of what faith in man means because our revolution started from scratch, from nothing. We did not have a single weapon, we did not have a penny, even the men who started the struggle were unknown, and yet we confronted all that might, we confronted their hundreds of millions of pesos, we confronted the thousands of soldiers, and the revolution triumphed because we believed in man. Not only was victory made possible, but so was confronting the empire and getting this far only a short way off from celebrating the twenty-ninth anniversary of the triumph of the revolution. How could we have done all of this if we had not had faith in man?

Che had great faith in man. Che was a realist and did not reject material incentives. He deemed them necessary during the transitional stage, while building socialism. But Che attached more importance — more and more importance — to the conscious factor, to the moral factor.

At the same time, it would be a caricature to believe that Che was unrealistic and unfamiliar with the reality of a society and a people who had just emerged from capitalism.

But Che was mostly known as man of action, a soldier, a leader, a military man, a guerrilla, an exemplary person who always was the first in everything; a man who never asked others to do something that he himself would not do first; a model of a righteous, honest, pure, courageous man. These are the virtues he possessed and the ones we remember him by.

Che was a man of very profound thought, and he had the exceptional opportunity during the first years of the revolution to delve deeply into very important aspects of the building of socialism because given his qualities, whenever a man was needed to do an important job, Che was always first there. He really was a many-sided man and whatever his assignment, he fulfilled it in a completely serious and responsible manner.

He was in INRA [National Institute of Agrarian Reform] and managed a few industries under its jurisdiction at a time when the main industries had not yet been nationalized and only a few factories had been taken over. He headed the National Bank, another of the responsibilities entrusted to him, and he also headed the Ministry of Industry when this agency was set up. Nearly all the factories had been nationalized by then and everything had to be organized, production had to be maintained, and Che took on the job, as he had taken on many others. He did so with total devotion, working day and night, Saturdays and Sundays, and he really set out to solve far-reaching problems. It was then that he

tackled the task of applying Marxist-Leninist principles to the organization of production, the way he understood it, the way he saw it.

He spent years doing that; he spoke a lot, wrote a lot on all those subjects, and he really managed to develop a rather elaborate and very profound theory on the manner in which, in his opinion, socialism would be built leading to a communist society.

Recently all these ideas were compiled, and an economist wrote a book that was awarded a *Casa de las Américas* prize. The author compiled, studied, and presented in a book the essence of Che's economic ideas, retrieved from many of his speeches and writings — articles and speeches dealing with a subject so decisive in the building of socialism. The name of the book is *The Economic Thoughts of Ernesto Che Guevara*.** So much has been done to recall his other qualities that this aspect, I think, has been largely ignored in our country. Che held truly profound, courageous, bold ideas, which were different from many paths already taken.

In essence — in essence! — Che was radically opposed to using and developing capitalist economic laws and categories in building socialism, he advocated something that I had often insisted on: Building socialism and communism is not just a matter producing and distributing wealth but is also a matter of education and consciousness. He was firmly opposed to using these categories, which have been transferred from capitalism to socialism, as instruments to build the new society.

At a given moment some of Che's ideas were incorrectly interpreted and, what's more, incorrectly applied. Certainly no serious attempt was ever made to put them into practice, and there came a time when ideas diametrically opposed to Che's economic thought began to take over.

This is not the occasion for going deeper and deeper into the subject. I'm essentially interested in expressing one idea: Today, on the twentieth anniversary of Che's death; today, in the midst of the profound rectification process we are all involved in, we fully understand that rectification does not mean extremism, that rectification cannot mean idealism, that rectification cannot imply for any reason whatsoever a lack realism, that rectification cannot even imply abrupt changes.

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Starting out from the idea that rectification means, as I've said before, looking for new solutions to old problems, rectifying many negative tendencies that had been developing; that rectification implies making more accurate use of the system which, as we said at the enterprises meeting, was a horse, a lame nag with many sores that we were treating with mercurochrome and prescribing medicines for, putting splints on one leg, in short, fixing up the nag, the horse. I said that the thing to do now was to go on using that horse, knowing its bad habits, the perils of that horse, how it kicked and bucked, and try to lead it on our path and not go wherever it wishes to take us. I've said, let us take up the reins!
[Applause]

These are very serious, complicated matters and here we can't afford to take shots in the dark, and there's no place for adventure of any kind. The experience of so many years that quite a few of us have had the privilege of accumulating through a revolutionary process is worth something. And that's why we say now, we cannot continue fulfilling the plan simply in terms of monetary value! We must also fulfill it in terms of goods produced. We demand this categorically, and anyone who does otherwise must be quickly replaced, because there's no other choice! *[Applause]*

We maintain that all projects must be started and finished quickly so that there is never a repeat of what happened to us on account of the nag's bad habits: that business of doing the earthmoving and putting up a few foundations because that was worth a lot and then not finishing the building because that was worth little; that tendency to say, "I fulfilled my plan as to value but I didn't finish a single building," which made us waste hundred of millions, billions, and we never finished anything.

It took fourteen years to build a hotel. Fourteen years wasting iron bars, sand, stone, cement, rubber, fuel, manpower before the country made a single penny from the hotel being used. Eleven years to finish our hospital here in Pinar del Río! It's true that in the end it was finished and it was finished well, but things of this sort should never happen again.

The minibrigades,[†] which were destroyed for the sake of such mechanisms, are now rising again from their ashes like a phoenix and demonstrating the significance of that mass movement the significance of that revolutionary path of solving the problems that the theoreticians, technocrats, those who do not believe in man, and who believe in two-bit capitalism had stopped and dismantled. This was how they were leading us into critical situations.

[†]The minibrigades are composed of workers from a particular workplace who volunteer to be relieved of their normal responsibilities for a period of time in order to build housing, schools and day-care centers. They were discontinued in the mid-1970s and launched again in 1986.

In the capital, where the minibrigades emerged, it pains us to think that over fifteen years ago we had found an excellent solution to such a vital problem, and yet they were destroyed in their peak moment. And so we didn't even have the manpower to building housing in the capital; and the problems kept piling up, tens of thousands of homes were propped up and were in danger of collapsing and killing people.

Now the minibrigades have been reborn and there are more than 20,000 minibrigades members in the capital. They're not in the contradiction with the nag, with the Economic Management and the Planning System, simple because the factory or workplace that sends them to the construction site pays them, but the state reimburses the factory or workplace for the salary of the minibrigades member. The difference is that whereas the worker would normally work five or six hours, on the minibrigades he works ten, eleven or twelve hours doing the job of two or three men, and the enterprise saves money.

Our two-bit capitalist can't say his enterprise is being ruined. On the contrary, he can say, "They're helping the enterprise. I'm doing the job with thirty, forty or fifty less men and spending less on wages." He can say, "I'm going to be profitable or at least lose less money; I'll distribute more prizes and bonuses since wage expenditures will be cut down." He organizes production better, he gets housing for his workers, who in turn are happier because they have new housing. He builds community projects such as special schools, polyclinics, day-care centers for the children of working women, for the family; in short, some many extremely useful things we are doing now and the state is building them without spending an additional cent in wages. That really is miraculous!

We could ask the two-bit capitalists and profiteers who have blind faith in the mechanisms and categories of capitalism: Could you achieve such a miracle? Could you manage to build 20,000 housing units in the capital without spending a cent more on wages? Could you build fifty day-care centers in a year without spending a cent more on wages, when only five had been included in the five-year plan and they weren't even built, and 19,5000 mothers were waiting to get their children a place, which never materialized.

At that rate, it would take 100 years! By then they would be dead, and fortunately so would all the technocrats, two-bit capitalists, and bureaucrats who obstruct the building of socialism. *[Applause]* They would have died without ever seeing day-care center number 100. Workers in the capital will have their 100 day-care centers in two years, and workers all over the country will have the 300 or so they need in three years. That will bring enrollment to 70,000 or 80,000 easily, without paying out an additional cent in wages or adding workers, because at that rate with overstaffing everywhere, we would have ended up bring workers in from Jamaica, Haiti, some Caribbean island, or some other place in the world. That was where we were heading.

It can be seen in the capital today that one in eight workers can be mobilized, I'm sure. This is not necessary because there would not be enough materials to give tasks to 100,000 people working Havana, each one doing the work of three. We're seeing impressive examples of feats of work, and this achieved by mass methods, by revolutionary methods, by communist methods, combining the interests of people in need with the interests of factories and those of society as a whole.

I don't want to become the judge of different theories, although I know what things I believe in and what things I don't and can't believe in. These questions are discussed frequently in the world today. And I only ask modestly, during the problem of rectification, during this process of this struggle — in which we're going to continue as we already explained: with the old nag, while it can still walk, if it walks, and until we can cast it aside and replace it with a better horse as I think that nothing is good if it's done in a hurry, without analysis and deep thought — What I ask for modestly at this twentieth anniversary is that Che's economic thought be made known; *[Applause]* that it be known here, in Latin America, in the world; in the developed capitalist world, in the Third World, and in the socialist world. Let it be known there too!

In the same way that we may read many texts, of all varieties, and many manuals, Che's economic thought should be known in the socialist camp. Let it be known! *[Applause]* I don't say they have to adopt it; we don't have to get involved in that. Everyone must adopt the thought, the theory the thesis they consider most appropriate, that which best suits them, as judged by each country. I absolutely respect the right of every country to apply the method or systems it considers appropriate; I respect it completely!

I simply ask that in a cultured country, in a cultured world, in a world where ideas are discussed, Che's economic theories should be made known *[Applause]* I especially ask that our students of economics, of whom we have many and who read all kinds of pamphlets, manuals, theories about capitalist categories and capitalist laws, also begin to study Che's economic thought, so as to enrich their knowledge.

It would be a sign of ignorance to believe there is only way of doing things arising from the concrete experience of a specific time and specific historical circumstances. What I ask for, what I limit myself to asking for, is a little more knowledge, consisting of knowing about other points-of-view, points-of-view as respected, as deserving and as coherent as Che's points-of-view *[Applause]*.

I can't conceive that our future economists, that our future generations will act, live and develop like another species of little animal, in the case like the mule, who has those blinders only so that he can't see to either side; mules, furthermore, with grass and carrot dangling in front as their only motivation. No, I

would like them to read, not only to intoxicate themselves with certain ideas, but also to look at other ones, analyze them, and think about them.

Because if we are talking with Che and we said to him, “Look, all this has happened to us,” all those things I was talking about before, what happened to us in construction, in agriculture, in industry, what happened in the terms of goods actually produced, work quality, and all that, Che would have said, “It’s as I warned, what’s happening is exactly what I thought would happen,” because that’s simply the way it is. *[Applause]*

I want our people to be a people of ideas, of concepts. I want them to analyze those ideas, think about them, and if they want, discuss them. I consider these things to be essential.

It might be that some of Che’s ideas are closely linked to the initial stages of revolution, for example his belief that when a quota was surpassed, the wages received should not go above that received by those on the scale immediately above. What Che wanted was for the worker to study, and he associated his concept with the idea that our people who in those days had very poor education and little technical expertise should study. Today our people are much better educated, more cultured. We could discuss whether now they should earn as much as the next level or more. We could discuss questions associated with our reality of a far more educated people, a people far better prepared technically, although we must never give up the idea of constantly improving ourselves technically,

But many of Che’s ideas are absolutely relevant today, ideas without which I am convinced communism cannot be built, like the idea that man should not be corrupted; that man should never be alienated; the idea that without consciousness, simply producing wealth, socialism as a superior society could not be built, and communism could never be built. *[Applause]*

I think that many of Che’s ideas — many of his ideas! — have great relevance today. Had we known, had we learned about Che’s economic thought we’d be a hundred times more alert, including in riding the horse, and whenever the horse wanted to turn left of right, wherever it wanted to turn — although, mind you, here this was without a doubt a right-wing horse — we should have pulled it up hard and got it back on track, and whenever it refused to move, used the spurs hard. *[Applause]*

I think a rider, that is to say, an economist, that is to say, a party cadre, armed with Che’s ideas would be better equipped to lead the horse along the right track. Just being familiar with Che’s thought, just knowing his ideas would enable him to say, “I’m doing badly here, I’m doing badly there, that’s a consequence of this, that, or the other,” provided that the system and mechanisms for building socialism and communism are really being developed and improved on.

I say this because it is my deepest conviction that if his thought remains unknown it will be difficult to get very far, to achieve real socialism, really revolutionary socialism, socialism with socialists, socialism and communism with communists. I'm absolutely convinced that ignoring those ideas would be a crime. That's what I'm putting to you.

We have enough experience to know how to do things; and there are extremely valuable principles of immense worth in Che's ideas and thought that simply go beyond the image that many people have of Che as a brave, heroic, pure man; of Che as a saint because of his virtues; as a martyr because of his selflessness and heroism. Che was also a revolutionary, a thinker, a man of doctrine, a man of great ideas, who was capable with great consistency of working out instruments and principles that unquestionably are essential to the revolutionary path.

Capitalists are very happy when they hear people talk about rent profit, interest, bonuses, superbonuses; when they hear about markets, supply and demand as elements that regulate production and promote quality, efficiency and all those things, for they say, "That's my kind of talk, that's my philosophy, that's my doctrine," and the emphasis that socialism may place on them makes them happy, for they know these are essential aspects of capitalist theory, laws and categories.

We ourselves are being criticized by quite a few capitalists; they try to make people think that the Cuban revolutionaries are unrealistic, that the thing to do is go for all the lures of capitalism; that's where they aim their fire. But we'll see how far we get, even riding on the old nag full of sores, but correctly led, for as long as we don't have anything better than the old nag. We'll see how far we get in the rectification process with the steps we're taking now.

That's why on this, the twentieth anniversary, I'm making an appeal for our party members, our youth, our students, our economists to study and familiarize themselves with Che's political and economic thought.

Che is a figure with enormous prestige. Che is a figure whose influence will grow. Needless to say, those who feel frustrated or who dare to fight Che's ideas or use certain terms to describe Che or depict him as a dreamer, as someone who is out of touch with reality, do not deserve any revolutionary's respect. That's why we want our youth to have that instrument, to wield that weapon, even if for the time being it only serves to say, don't follow that mistaken path foreseen by Che; even if it only serves to increase our knowledge; even if it only serves to meditate or to delve deeper into our revolutionary thought.

I sincerely believe that more than this ceremony, more than formal activities, more than all the honors, what we accomplish, is the best homage we can pay to

Che. The work spirit that is starting to appear in so many places and that is evident in so many examples in this province: those workers in Viñales who are working twelve and fourteen hours building minidams, starting them and finishing them one right after the other, and building them at half what they otherwise would have cost, with the result that in comparison with other projects — were we to use a capitalist term, although Che was opposed to even using capitalist terms when analyzing questions of socialism — were we to use the term profitability, we could say that those men on the minidam construction brigade working in Viñales are more than 100 percent profitable — more than 100 percent profitable! *[Applause]*

Che devoted absolute, total, priority attention to accounting, to analyzing expenditures and costs, cent by cent. Che could not conceive of building socialism and running the economy without proper organization, without efficient controls and strict account of every cent. Che could not conceive of development without an increase in labor productivity. He even studied mathematics to use mathematical formulas to implement controls and measure the efficiency of the economy. What's more, Che even dreamed of computers being used in running the economy as an essential, fundamental and decisive way of measuring efficiency under socialism.

And those men I have mentioned have made a contribution: for every peso spent, they produce two million. They and those working on the Guamá Dam, those working on the canal, those working on the thruway to Pinar del Río, those who are going to work on the Patate Dam, those who have started to work on roads and the water works in the city — there are a number of groups of workers who are carrying out real feats with pride, honor, discipline, loyalty to work. They are working with great productivity.

A few days ago, we met with a group of construction workers building an avenue in the capital. They're all members of the party or the Union of Young Communists, and they're outstanding workers, about 200 men in all. Rather than linking their wages to production norms — I don't mean to say that this is negative, there are a number of fields where it is perfectly correct — since they do move about in powerful trucks and machines, we don't have to tell them to work more but rather to work less. People like that are doing a lot, sometimes too much with too much effort. At times, we'd have to tell them to take less trips because at the proper speed they can't make twenty-five trips with materials in a truck but twenty, because we don't want them to get killed. What we're interested in is not only what they do but the quality with which it is done. We told them we were much more interested in the quality than the quantity. *[Applause]* Quantity without quality is a waste of resources; it's throwing away work and materials.

Awareness of the need for water conservation, which had virtually died out in the shameful period when nothing was finished, is being regained, and the province of Pinar del Río is playing a leading role in this regard. *[Applause]*

The road brigades in the mountains of Pinar del Río are working with the same spirit, and the awareness of the need for water conservation is spreading all over the country with the desire to build roads and highways and improve the efficiency of our economy, factories, agriculture, hospitals and schools, to go full speed ahead with the economic and social development of the country.

Fortunately, during these years we have trained a large number of people with a high degree of technical knowledge and experience — university graduates and intermediate-level technicians. How does this compare to what we had in the early years of the revolution? When Che headed the Ministry of Industry, how many engineers did the country have, how many technicians, designers, researchers, scientists? Now we must have about twenty times the number we had then, perhaps more. If he had been able to draw on the collective experience of all the cadres that we have now, who knows what we could have accomplished.

Let's look at the medical sector alone. Back then, we had 3,000 doctors and now we have 28,000. Each year our twenty-one medical schools graduate as many doctors as the total number in the country at that time. What a privilege! What a power! What a force! As of the next year, we'll be graduating more doctors than those who stayed in the country in the early years. Can we not do what we set our minds to in the field of public health? And what doctors they are! They work in the countryside, in the mountains, or in Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Kampuchea, or at the end of the world! Those are the doctors trained by the revolution! *[Applause]*

I'm sure Che would be proud, not of the shoddy things that have been done with such a two-bit profiteering mentality; he'd be proud of the knowledge and technology our people have, of our teachers who went to Nicaragua, and the 100,000 who offered to go! He'd be proud of our doctors willing to go anywhere in the world, or our technicians, of our hundreds of thousands of compatriots who have been on international missions! *[Applause]*

I'm sure Che would be proud of that spirit just like we all are, but we cannot permit what we have built with our heads and hearts to be trampled on with our feet. *[Applause]* That's the point, that and the fact that with all the resources we have built up, with all that force, we should be able to advance and take advantage of all the potential opened up by socialism and the revolution to get people to move ahead. I would like to know if the capitalists have people like those I mentioned.

They are extraordinary internationalists and workers; you have to talk to them to see how they think and feel, to see how deeply they love their work, and this is not because they're workaholics but because they feel the need to make up for lost

time, time lost during the revolution, time lost during almost 60 years of neocolonial republic, time lost during centuries of colonialism.

We must regain this time! And hard work is the only way, not waiting 100 years to build 100 day-care centers in the capital when we can really do it in two; not waiting 100 years to build 350 all over the country when we can do it three with our work; not waiting 100 years to solve the housing problem when we can do in a few years with our work, our stones, our sand, our materials, our cement, even with our oil and steel produced by workers.

As I said this afternoon at the hospital ceremony, the year 2000 is just around the corner. We must set ourselves ambitious goals for 2000, not for the year 3000 or 2100 or 2050, and if someone suggests that we should, we must reply: "That may suit you, but not us! We have the historic mission of building a new country, a new society, the historic mission of making a revolution and developing a country; those of us who have had the honor and privilege of not just promoting development but a socialist development and working for a more humane and advanced society."

To those who encourage laziness and frivolity, we will say, "We will live longer than you, no just better than you, or like we would live if everyone were like you. We will live longer than you and be healthier than you because with your laziness you will be sedentary and obese, you will have heart problems, circulatory ailments, and all sorts of other things, because work doesn't harm your health, work promotes health, work safeguards health and work created man."

These men and women doing great things must become models. We could say that they're being true to the motto, "We will belike Che!" They are working like Che worked or, as Che would have worked. *[Applause]*

When we were discussing where this ceremony should be held, there were many possible places. It could have been in the Plaza of the Revolution in the capital; it could have been in a province; it could have been in one of the many workplaces or factories that the workers wanted to name after Che.

We gave the matter some thought and recalled this new and important factory, the pride of Pinar del Río, the pride of the country and example of what can be done with progress, study, education in this province, which in the past was so neglected and backward and now has young workers capable of running such a complex and sophisticated factory. We need only say that the rooms where the circuits are printed must be ten times cleaner than an operating room to meet the required standard. It was necessary to do such complex work, with such quality and good equipment, and Pinar del Río residents are doing it marvelously. *[Applause]*

When we toured it we were deeply impressed and talked with many compañeros, the members of the Central Committee about what they were doing in the factory, which is advancing at a rapid pace; what was being done in construction. We realized the great future of this factory as a manufacturer of components, of vanguard technology, which will have a major impact on development and productivity, on the automation of production processes.

When we toured your first-rate factory and saw the ideas you had which are being put into practice, we realized it would become a huge complex of many thousands of workers, the pride of the province and the pride of the country. In the next five years, more than 100-million pesos will be invested in it to make it a real giant. When we learned that the workers wanted to name it after Che because he was so concerned with electronics, computers and mathematics, the leadership of our party decided that this was where the ceremony marking the twentieth anniversary of Che's death should be held, *[Applause]* and that factory should be given the glorious and beloved name of Ernesto Che Guevara. *[Applause]*

I know that its the workers, its young workers, its dozens and dozens of engineers, its hundreds of technicians will do honor to that name and work as they should. This doesn't only mean being here fourteen, twelve, or ten hours, for often on certain jobs, eight hours of work well done is a real feat. We've seen compañeros, especially many women workers doing microsoldering, which is really difficult work that requires rigor and tremendous concentration. We've seen them, and it's hard to imagine how these compañeros can spend eight hours doing that work and turn out up to 5,000 units daily.

Compañeros, don't think that we feel that's the only way to solve problems is to work twelve or fourteen hours a day. There are jobs where you can't work twelve or fourteen hours. In some, even eight hours can be a lot. One day, we hope that not all workdays will be the same. We hope that in certain fields — if we have enough personnel, and we will if we employ them efficiently — we can have six-hour workdays.

What I mean to say is that being true to Che's example and name also means using the workday with the right pace, being concerned about high standards, having people do various tasks, avoiding overstaffing, working in an organized manner and developing consciousness.

I'm sure that the workers of this factory will be worthy of Che's name, *[Applause]* just as I'm sure that this province was deserving of hosting the anniversary and will continue to be deserving.

If there is something left to say tonight, it's that despite our problems; despite the fact that we have less hard currency than ever before, for reasons we have explained in the past; despite the drought; despite the intensification of the

imperialist blockade — as I see our people respond, as I see more and more possibilities open up, I feel confident, I feel optimistic, and I am absolutely convinced that we will do everything we set our minds to! *[Applause]*

We'll do it with the people, with the masses; we'll do it with the principles, pride, honor of each and every one of our party members, workers, youth, peasants and intellectuals!

I can proudly say that we are giving Che well-deserved tribute and honor, and if he lives more than ever, so will the homeland! If he is an opponent of imperialism more powerful than ever, the homeland will also be more powerful than ever against imperialism and its rotten ideology! *[Applause]* And if one day we chose the path of revolution, of socialist revolution and of communism, the path of building communism, today we are prouder to have chosen that path because it is the only one that can give rise to men like Che and a people composed of millions of men and women capable of being like Che! *[Applause]*

As [José] Martí said, whereas there are men without dignity, there are also men who carry inside them the dignity of many men! We might add that there are men who carry inside them the dignity of the world, and one of those men is Che!

Patria o muerte! [Homeland or death!]
Venceremos! [We will win!] *[Ovation]*

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