

UNITY AMONG THE
INTELLECTUALS OF
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ENCOURAGING

Speech by
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The holding in Havana of the 1st Meeting of Intellectuals for the Sovereignty of the Peoples of Our America and the conclusions arrived at there demonstrate two important things: first, the determination of the intellectuals of Our America to assume the greatest moral and ideological responsibilities in the struggle against imperialism and fascist regimes, and second, the great interest shown by our creative artists in engaging a constructive dialogue with U.S. intellectuals and, through them, with the people of the United States.

Transcending the philosophical, religious and political differences that exist in the field of culture, decisive steps were taken to create a definitive mainstream of principles whose ideological basis is to be found in the universal culture of Our America.

An international Standing Committee of Intellectuals was set up, composed of figures of firm and unquestionable prestige; and its first gathering following the Havana Meeting will take place in Managua within a few days. National committees of intellectuals have also been set up in various countries, and there is no reason why this cannot be done also among Latin American and Caribbean intellectuals residing in the United States.

The cultural history of Our America has entered upon a new stage. It is a stage characterized by intellectuals' growing awareness that they, too, form an intrinsic part of the oppressed peoples and that their creative work should reflect the peoples' authentic desire for social liberation. Moreover, our intellectuals consider it an honor to be given the opportunity to play their great social and historical role. And they are ready to play it not because it is being imposed on them from outside, but because they themselves have assumed the responsibility, spontaneously, as a cultural act that springs from deep within them as moral human beings. Latin American and Caribbean intellectuals are not content with simply being the critical conscience of society. They feel capable of accomplishing something that is far more lofty and humane. Armed with their gift for creativity they wish to contribute to the transformation of society and to take an active part in the defense of sovereignty and freedom and of the principles of man's full dignity as proclaimed by José Martí. Given the culture they possess and the culture they know they can create, the intellectuals of Our America have come to realize with ever greater understanding and depth that it is their duty —and that it is within their power —to exert an extremely positive influence on the course of history. Rather than avoiding this challenge, they rise to it and feel rewarded by the opportunity to take a stand that commits them irrevocably to America and to the rest of humanity.

Every historical movement has been preceded by upheavals in intellectual life. The American and French Revolutions of the late 18th century had their necessary antecedents in the ideas of the Encyclopedists. The struggles waged for the independence of Our America in the 19th century had their precursors in thoughts and ideas. The social and revolutionary battles and the struggles and victories of socialism in this century were the result of large philosophical movements that came into being in the first half of the 19th century. Today's intellectuals and artists who met in Havana demonstrated that they were carrying on the traditions of past battles waged, and that they were concerned to bring about new and profound transformations, inspired by humanity's ideological and cultural traditions. At the

same time, our intellectuals aspire to awake with their ideas a continent-wide awareness of the need for a substantial change in the nature of the relations between the two Americas: the America of Bolívar and Martí and the America of Payne and Lincoln.

No honest person familiar with the spirit that guides our intellectuals could accuse them of wanting to divorce themselves from the cultural movement that is taking place in this hemisphere. No one who has penetrated the thinking of Our America could honestly say that the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean, whether victorious or still in the process of gestation, are trying to erect an impassable barrier between the peoples to the south and the north of the Rio Grande. The question is precisely one of achieving an open, sincere and honest dialogue between the peoples of the two Americas to ensure peace among the nations and a happy future for our children. This is the main objective of the intellectual movement we are encouraging. Unity among all the intellectuals of the two Americas, transcending all philosophical differences and political interests in order to prevent a world holocaust and the end of civilization, is a purpose that will confirm to each one of us and to history itself that we are worthy of being called intellectuals and that we have the capacity to create and can make use of it. And if we hold fast to that purpose and work systematically to achieve it we will be confirming our cultural vocation and our value as human beings.

Those who fail to understand, or who oppose, the necessity of the encounter between the intellectuals of the two Americas will be showing once again that they are devoid of the human essence that constitutes the most substantial, beautiful and important element of culture.

However, if we are to speak of unity in Our America and of a dialogue with the intellectuals of the United States, we must first study the roots and the history of the two societies, approaching the huge task we have set for ourselves intelligently, courageously and comprehensively. For me as a Cuban, a Latin American and a Caribbean, the best way to approach the subjects

and to throw out some ideas is to recall some of Martí's ideas.

Tonight I would like all of us to meditate on José Martí. I am well aware that the hero of Cuba's independence was not only a Cuban, not only a Latin American, but a figure of universal relevance. Few men of his time has such a universal character and very few knew Our America and studied the United States as he did.

This is why most of the ideas I will express tonight come from José Martí. His monumental works —28 volumes in all —are a lasting treasure and have an incredible validity.

Martí studied Our America, the United States and the world. He wrote of the laws that govern the changes in our society. Therefore, allow me to take from his immense arsenal of ideas and culture some paragraphs which are relevant to our meeting and to our future endeavors to create a united force in Latin America and the Caribbean and to tackle together the problems of our links with the intellectuals movement in the United States.

In a passage discussing Albertini and Cervantes, José Martí begins with the following paragraph, which I quote:

"A fine thing in the people of Cuba is the capacity to admire, which, in the final analysis, is simply the capacity to construct, and is more publicly fruitful than its opposite, the capacity to belittle —which, in essence, is the capacity to destroy".

And Martí added: "Mankind is divided into two camps: those who love and create, and those who hate and destroy".

How did Martí see these two camps and how can they be defined? Let us recall, first of all, the memorable verses of the Apostle of Cuba's independence when he wrote:

"With the poor of the earth I cast in my lot; the mountain stream pleases me more than the sea".

What were Martí's views on the two camps in regard to U.S. society? Let us glance at a paragraph in his article "Vindicación de Cuba", published in a New York newspaper in 1899. Referring to the United States, Martí said that the Cubans of his time admired that nation, "the greatest ever built by liberty... But they dislike the evil elements that like worms in the heart have begun in this mighty republic their work of destruction".

Martí went on to say: "They have made the heroes of this country" —that is, the United States —"their own heroes, look to the success of the American commonwealth as the crowning glory for mankind", but he immediately added: "but they cannot honestly believe that exclusive individualism, reverence for wealth and the protracted exultation of a terrible victory" —that is, the North's victory over the South in the Civil War —"are preparing the United States to be the typical nation of liberty, where no opinion is to be based on greed for power, and no triumph or acquisition reached contrary to charity and justice.... We love the land of Lincoln," he concluded, "as much as we fear the land of Cutting." (Cutting was an obscure adventurer who vaunted of his intention to annex territory in northern Mexico and hand it over to the United States.)

When the Latin American intellectuals speak of a dialogue with those of the United States, it is Lincoln's heirs they mean. In the United States, Lincoln's heirs belong to the side of those who love and create, and Cutting's heirs belong to the side of those who hate and destroy. The rich and powerful belong to the side of those who hate and destroy, while with those who love and create are the poor of the earth, with whom Martí wanted to cast in his lot.

Comrades, we can find the description of the U.S. society of those times and the type of relations that must have existed between the two Americas in the following paragraph of a letter written by Martí in New York in 1881. This is what the hero of our independence said about the United States:

"This country, to all appearances the master of all the peoples of the world, is actually the slave of every

base passion that perturbs and perverts the other peoples."

Let us imagine U.S. society in the decade between 1880 and 1890. The United States was at that time one of the world's freest and most democratic nations. José Martí admired the democratic ideas that in his time were revolutionizing the old feudal and monarchic societies, the ideas on which the Declaration of Independence of 1776 was based. But although the Bill of Rights had been proclaimed in 1776, the slave-owning regime remained in power in the United States until the 1860s. Martí detested black slavery and admired Abraham Lincoln for his decrees abolishing that opprobrious system. He studied the consequences of the Civil War, pointing out that the purpose of the war had been not so much to put an end to slavery as to settle the dispute between North and South for control of the nation.

This background led Martí to the conclusion in 1881 that the germ that would destroy democratic freedoms was already consuming the foundations of U.S. society. Thus, in a letter written in New York that year, he wrote:

"This moneyed aristocracy has given birth to a political aristocracy; it controls the newspapers, wins elections and has the upper hand in assemblies over that arrogant cast, which waits with ill-disguised impatience for the time when the number of its adherents will enable it to grasp hold of the nation's sacred book, and to rewrite for the benefit and privilege of one class the Magna Carta of generous freedoms under whose protection these vulgar potentates amassed the fortunes that they are now so eargely waiting to turn to its detriment."

This was Martí's considered judgment.

In that same year he commented on a statement made by a U.S. senator who had said:

"And once we have won Canada and Mexico and rule unrivaled over the continent, what kind of future will be in store for our civilization?"

Here is Martí's answer:

"Truly, a terrible future: the future that was Carthage's!"

Friends and comrades, this is the civilization that Cutting's heirs imposed, and want to continue imposing, on us.

I want to return to the theme of those who hate and destroy, as opposed to those who love and create. Let us call to mind a letter Martí wrote in 1885, in which he said:

"How wicked are those who make their fortunes out of the peoples' troubles and the peoples' hatred! They should be paraded through the streets in chains, bare-foot, with their heads shaved! Bankers? No, bandits, that's what they are!"

In another letter, this time in 1882, he wrote:

"It does not seem to me to be the right stock for a people, this exclusive, vehement and frenzied love for material wealth that grows here like a weed and polishes people, as it were, only on one side, making them resemble at once giants and children. It is certain that all those covetous thinkers are seething with ideas that are neither pleasing nor calming to the younger lands of Our America, who are preoccupied with more generous ideas. I would certainly find it very painful to watch the death of a turtle-dove at the hands of an ogre."

And in another letter, written in 1884, Martí had this to say about the United States:

"... in this convulsed, sumptuous, enormous country, life is nothing but the winning of fortunes; that is the disease that is inherent in its greatness. It attacks its liver; it eats into its very entrails; it is distorting, disfiguring and deforming everything it touches."

And, on the same subject, in 1887:

"An unrestrained cult of wealth has made this republic, untrammelled by traditions, fall prey to the inequality, injustice and violence typical of countries ruled by a monarchy."

A very important stage in the ideological development of Martí's thought, in which he reveals tellingly

the process of transition in U.S. society between 1880 and 1890, is reflected in the following paragraph, an observation worthy of inclusion among the masterpieces of modern social sciences. I quote:

"What **La Nación** saw years ago can now be seen at close range. The people's republic is gradually turning into a class republic; the privileged, confident of their wealth, defy exasperate, abuse and cast out from a free place in society those who come to it with no other property but their arms and their minds; the rich stand on one side and the poor on the other; the rich band together and so do the poor.... It is evident that neither pompous institutions, nor impressive statistics, nor benevolent laws, nor vast schools, nor any kind of external trappings, can be set against the onslaught of a nation that looks upon them with scorn, driven as it is by an avaricious, egotistical concept of life."

In 1889, Martí wrote:

"These cardboard Republicans who deny the English king his divine right, now claim power and greatness like a new divine right and manifest destiny; they feel the right to rule is theirs by nature, and authorizes them to go about the world like bandits, swallowing up peoples the way the feudal lords swallowed up castles"

In 1889, on the occasion of the 1st Pan-American Congress, held in Washington, Martí wrote these words of warning:

"Never before in America, from its independence to the present, has there been a matter requiring more good judgment or more vigilance, or demanding a clearer and more thorough examination, than the invitation which the powerful United States (glutted with unsalable merchandise and determined to extend its dominions in America) is sending to the less powerful American nations (bound by free and useful commerce to the European nations) for purposes of arranging an alliance against Europe and cutting off transactions with the rest of the world. Spanish America learned how to save itself from the tyranny of Spain; and now, after viewing with judicial eyes the antecedents, motives

and ingredients of the invitation, it is essential to say, for it is true, that the time has come for Spanish America to declare its second independence."

Further on in the same article Martí pointed out:

"Only a virile and unanimous response, for which there is still time without risk, can free all the Spanish American nations at one time from the anxiety and agitation — fatal in a country's hour of development — in which the secular and admittedly predominant policy of a powerful and ambitious neighbor, with the possible connivance of the weak or venal republics, would forever hold them. This powerful neighbor has never desired to encourage them to develop, nor has it dealt with them except to prevent their expansion, as in Panama; or to take possession of their territory, as in México, Nicaragua, Santo Domingo, Haití and Cuba or to cut off their trade with the rest of the world, as in Colombia; or to oblige them to buy what it cannot sell, as it is now doing, and to form a confederacy for purposes of controlling them."

These are all direct quotes from Martí's article.

Let us see now how Martí exposed the concrete details of the Yankee empire's sinister plan, which centered around Cuba, the Antilles and Central America. In a letter to the Cuban Gonzalo de Quesada y Aróstegui in 1889, our National Hero said this about Cuba:

"Gonzalo, there's a fresh plan about our island that is far more sinister than any we have yet known, and that is to force it into war in order to have a pretext for intervening in it in guise of mediator and guarantor, and to end up owning it. No more cowardly action, no more cold-blooded evil, exists in the annals of the free peoples!"

Martí's newspaper **Patria** was the voice of the Cuban Revolution. It was created to express the theoretical basis and the revolutionary strategy of our war of independence. In an article entitled "The Truth About the United States," published in **Patria** in 1894, Martí wrote:

"From the standpoint of justice and a legitimate social science it should be recognized that, in relation to

the ready compliance of the one and the obstacle of the other, the North American character has gone downhill since the winning of independence, and is today less human and virile; whereas the Spanish American character today is in all ways superior, in spite of its confusion and fatigue, to what it was when it began to emerge from the disorganized mass of grasping clergy, unskilled ideologists, and ignorant or savage Indians."

"And to aid in the understanding of political reality in America, and to accompany or correct with the calm force of fact the ill-advised praise (pernicious when carried to extremes) of the North American character and political life, **Patria** is inaugurating, with today's issue, a permanent section devoted to 'Notes on the United States'."

Comrades, we have a sacred commitment to Martí which I believe should be felt by all Our America. According to the statutes of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, the purpose of the war of independence was to direct and organize the country's liberation and to help and support the independence of the sister people of Puerto Rico. Our heartfelt solidarity with the Puerto Rican people is part of a long history whose origin is to be found in the ideas of the leading patriots in the struggle against Spanish colonialism and is reflected in José Martí's political and revolutionary ideas.

Allow me to read what Martí wrote in an article published in 1894:

"Cuba and Puerto Rico will enter upon freedom with very different compositions and at very different stages of history, and will assume responsibilities much greater than those of the other Spanish American people... The Antilles are the balance point of America. If enslaved they would become a mere pontoon in a war between an imperial republic and a zealous and superior world that is preparing to deprive it of its power, a mere advance fort of an American Rome; and, if freed — and they deserve to be so for the sake of equal liberty and work for all — they would guarantee not only the stability and independence of a still imperiled Spanish America but also the honor of the great republic of the North, which would attain more

greatness in the development of its own territory — already under a feudal system and distributed among hostile factions — than in the dishonorable conquest of its smaller neighbors and the inhuman struggle for world control against the powers of the globe that would result from such conquest."

The validity of these words is truly impressive. But let us follow him further:

"We are not simply trying to liberate two islands. What is at stake is the balance of a whole world. What a contrast between the small town gossiping, the pin-pricks of female vanity, the futile efforts behind the charges of demagoguery and flattery of the mob and this work of continental vision, the true greatness of ensuring, through the happiness of free, hard-working people in an independent nation, friendship between the opposed forces in a continent, and of preventing, through the existence of the free and prosperous Antilles, unnecessary conflict between a nation that wants to tyrannize America and the world allied against such an ambition!... An error in Cuba is an error in America, an error for modern mankind. Those who now stand at Cuba's side do so for the rest of time...."

"The Cuban Revolutionary Party is bowing into the third year of life, compassionate and stable, convinced that the independence of Cuba and Puerto Rico is not only the sole means of ensuring the happiness that come from freedom and equitable work for the peoples of both islands but also the indispensable historical event for the salvation of the threatened independence of the free Antilles, the threatened independence of free America and the dignity of the North American republic. Let the weaklings make way, and let the giants march forward! For this is a task for giants!"

Comrades, one of José Martí's most cherished dreams was to prevent, by securing the freedom of the Antilles, the most reactionary circles in the United States from "descending with added strength on the lands of Our America." José Martí hoped that the independence of Cuba and Puerto Rico would prevent Cutting's emulators from building a new empire in the western he-

misphere that would serve them as a base for world domination.

He expressed this hope in a memorable letter written to his Mexican friend Manuel Mercado in his camp at Dos Ríos, two days before his death. The letter reads as follows:

"My dearest brother: At last I am able to write and express tender, grateful and respectful affection toward you and that house which is also mine and a source of pride and obligation to me. I am daily risking my life for my country and — since I understand it so and have the spirit to carry it out — for my duty to halt in time, by securing the independence of Cuba, the spread of the United States across the Antilles and to prevent its descending with added strength on the lands of Our America. All I have done to this day, and all I shall ever do, is for that purpose."

We are all familiar with what followed. The United States took over Cuba and a large part of Central America and the Caribbean and did indeed descend with added strength on the lands of Our America. Martí's fears were confirmed and became a bitter, painful reality. But the Master's teachings had made their way into the hearts of all Cubans, and after enduring a neocolonial imperialist government for almost 60 years, they freed themselves of the yoke of oppression and raised the banner of freedom and independence. Later, other peoples, the people of Nicaragua, for instance, followed the example set by Sandino and Fonseca Amador and began their own war of liberation to conquer their independence. The peoples of the Caribbean and Central America, at the balance point of the world, refused — and will continue to refuse — to live on their knees and are standing up in firm opposition to the U.S. empire.

Recalling the words of our National Poet Nicolás Guillén:

Long was the journey and bitter the road / A
tree has sprung from the blood of my wound / to
shelter a bird that sings of life / and welcomes
the day with its song.

That day that is welcomed with a song lives in the brave, revolutionary hearts of a handful of Central American and Caribbean peoples who are struggling for their freedom, struggling to pave the way for America's final independence. As loyal followers of Martí, we Cubans and Latin Americans call on all men and women of the other America—Lincoln's America—who love freedom and justice, to join us in the prevention of a crime and to welcome that morning with a song.

The colossal problem I have described in this speech has reached its crowning point. We are arriving at the climax of a situation whose origin is found in the problems Martí identified in the late 19th century. Martí said that an error in Cuba would be an error that would affect all modern mankind. Army intervention in our lands in the 20th century is an even more serious error, and may result in a disaster of incalculable magnitude. We must mobilize world public opinion to tie the aggressor's hands. It is not a question of saving just a few countries, but rather of preventing a tragedy whose consequences for all humanity are unpredictable.

As the world drew near year 1000 A.D., many people fell prey to their imagination and their fear of the unknown and were afraid the world was coming to an end. Now, as we stand at the threshold of the year 2000, the end of humanity is, unfortunately, no longer a fragment of the imagination or fantasy, but rather a real possibility, owing to the development of the arms race and the criminal increase in the number of devices for destruction. Can humanity and its culture, that is, its human conscience prevent such an irrational, insane thing as nuclear war and worldwide extermination? Intellectuals and all intelligent people believe that such a stupidity, such madness can be prevented. However, what is needed is the broadest possible mobilization of all forces that belong to the side of those who love and create. It calls for stopping those who in the U.S. empire's nuclear arsenals have joined the side of those who hate and destroy.

The United States will achieve no greatness in committing the criminal mistake of intervening in our lands.

On the contrary, it will suffer a great loss. José Martí said that the United States would attain more greatness in the development of its own territory than in exerting an imperial domination over the peoples of Latin America. And by stopping those who are trying to push the United States into an intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, the people of the United States would be winning a great victory for their own democracy. The final victory of democratic forces in the United States over the forces of obscurantism and war will be one of the most extraordinary achievements in the history of humanity. The only way to guarantee both in Our America and in North America is for us to employ every means at our disposal to prevent the most aggressive circles of the U.S. empire from making the crass mistake of launching an intervention. Therefore, this is the most pressing and most important task that we, unwavering democrats of the two Americas, must undertake. The most reactionary circles of imperialism must be given to understand that we are no longer living at the beginning of the 20th century and that our peoples are not unarmed. They must be given to understand that if they should commit the criminal mistake of interfering in our affairs with their brutal interventions as they did in past decades, this time our peoples will know how to defend themselves, and can not only defend themselves but also win a victory like Playa Girón, a victory like the victory won by the heroic Vietnamese in the 70s.

Patria Libre o Morir!

Patria o Muerte!

Venceremos!

