

[Interview given by Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz to the national press after exercising his right to vote](#)

Autor:

- [Castro Ruz, Fidel](#)

• (The Comandante greets those present, speaks with some voters and the people on the electoral board and then casts his vote)

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- We are so happy to see you, Comandante! Truly, we say that from the heart.

Comandante.- And I am moved and very pleased to be conversing with you

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- We are here as always, Comandante. We wish you very good health.

Comandante.- Are you journalists?

Compañera Ivía Pérez Reyes.- Yes, we're all journalists, from Granma, from Trabajadores ...

Comandante.- From Cuba?

Ivía Pérez Reyes.- We're all Cuban.

Journalist Fabiola López.- And from Telesur.

Ivía Pérez Reyes.- Ah, Fabiola, you're here.

Comandante.- Who is shooting?

Pionero.- The cameras.

Comandante.- I know, but they sounded like machines guns.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- We're not asking you who you voted for because that's secret.

Comandante.- I am very satisfied with the list of candidates.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Comandante, have you followed the process throughout the day, in the whole country? How has it seemed to you?

Comandante.- Yes, I am following the news.

They told me that they had made another entrance. I think there used to be a stairway here.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- They changed the entrance, now they've put the entrance here.

Comandante.- That was a good idea.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Of course, because it's more convenient, there are no stairs any more..

Have you any news about Chávez?

Comandante.- About Chávez? Yes, every day. He is recovering, according to the last medical report that I received today, Sunday, February 3 at midday.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Improving.

Comandante.- Yes, although the days have been difficult and hard. Our doctors are dedicated to this task, that is what I can tell you, given that the information is a right that corresponds to the Bolivarian Government and his family members.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- And the voting was a little... because it rained; but after that it seems that people have come out and a lot of them... the voting is very advanced today.

Comandante.- Ah, a doctor told me that he was in his polling station a short while ago and there were only four people left to vote. How many have voted here?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Over 300. Already around 90% have voted here.

Comandante.- And the rest haven't voted?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- No, because many people are working, the head of the electoral board was explaining to me, or they are abroad.

Comandante.- Ah, good, abroad, but they cannot vote...

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Yes, they can vote.

Comandante.- Ah, abroad?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- I don't know if they can vote abroad, but those who are working in Cuba can vote at another polling station.

Comandante.- No, no, I believe that people can vote in another polling station if they request permission.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Ah. But we voted here.

Comandante.- Right here?

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Yes.

Comandante.- And I almost didn't see you (Laughter).

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Ah, you see!

Comandante.- We're so organized that I didn't know that.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Yes. Early this morning. Yes, because as deputies are national, you can vote at another polling station.

Comandante.- No, and you are journalists?

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Yes, all journalists.

Comandante.- You have the right to vote wherever you are.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Aha, wherever you are.

Comandante.- And what are you reporting on now?

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Well, we've been waiting for you all day, because we wanted to see if you would come, or if you were going to send in your vote; but we've interviewed many people here, among them young people and children.

Comandante.- They built a small passageway for the October elections, but they didn't say a word to me.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- And how did you decide to come, then?

Comandante.- Because a member of the polling station convinced me to.

I had asked several compañeros who work with me the number of steps and the height of the entry stairway. They told me that there were eight steep steps, which was correct. My knee, shattered when I fell in Santa Clara in October 2004, close to two years before I became ill in July 2006, has also taken its toll on me.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- There are a lot of women, Comandante, in Parliament. What do you think of that?

Comandante.- Good, it seems very good to me, and they gave me the opportunity of... well, I can't say, because it's secret (Laughter), there were three women among the candidates.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Of course you voted for the women

Comandante.- Maybe. What do you think?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- I think you did (Laughter). Women make up almost 50% of Parliament.

Comandante.- And I'm not violating any law?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- No, if you say it you're not violating anything. Comandante.- Well, yes.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- See, you voted for the women.

Comandante.- Yes, and so that they did not feel discriminated against, I also voted for a man who was a candidate... (Laughter)

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Many thanks.

Comandante.- If they take me to court for that, I'll be calling you in (Laughter). Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Yes, yes.

Comandante.- I am happy that, here as well, women journalists are in the majority..

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Yes, we are in the majority.

Comandante.- Let's see. Ah, and what's that little piece of equipment?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- It's a recorder, Comandante.

Comandante.- A recorder.

And are they extremely cheap now or are they very expensive? And batteries, how much?...

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- The batteries are a little more expensive, but they're also rechargeable, now you can recharge everything at the mains.

Comandante.- Yes. And what's this, for example... (Pointing).

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- That's a phone that also works as a recorder, Comandante.

Comandante.- Yes? I have to use a lot of these little electronic devices, but my compañeros help me.

Who is she? (Referring to a young pionera standing beside the ballot box)

María Antonia Puertas.- This girl has been here since 6:00am, Comandante.

Comandante.- ... Didn't they bring her lunch?

María Antonia Puertas.- Yes, she's had lunch, but she's been here since early morning.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Yes, everyone has had lunch.

Comandante.- How many mistakes can be made through lack of information!

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Well, but we'll know for the next time.

Comandante.- When I think... well, I'll have to thank Santiaguito for the rest of my life (Laughter)

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Yes. Santiaguito informed you.

Comandante.- That's the polling station member's name; he said to me: "Yes, it's only a step away;" I thought he was making little of the stairway; I didn't know anything about the new entry.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Listen to that! They've had the steps fixed since last October.

Comandante.- Yes, the polling station president told me that when I arrived. Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Well, now you know.

Comandante.- The people were saying in the October elections for municipal delegates: "Why didn't Fidel come to vote?" I didn't know what had been done, that it isn't the same. It horrifies me to think that I almost didn't come today and I would have left you all waiting for me again.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- But you came.

Comandante.- I enjoy defying the stairs.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- That's great, Comandante!

But, moreover, Comandante, a lot of history has come together here today.

Comandante.- What else?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- No, I was saying to you that a lot of history has come together here today, Comandante. Ever since elections began in this country, you have habitually come to vote here. I was saying there a lot of history has come together in this place and a lot more during today. I'm saying, there is so much history come together in this place, and much more during today.

Comandante.- I dedicated quite a lot of time to the question of elections, they have gradually acquired experience and I'm happy about that, because despite the stupid things that certain people in the world affirm, it is a genuine electoral process; they are elections in which not only deputies to the National Assembly and delegates to the Provincial Assemblies, but also candidates to those posts are elected by the people without the intervention of the state or the [Communist] Party. Before, I didn't have so much time, now I see assemblies in neighborhoods, discussions and discussions by the people as to who should be their candidates. Does it happen like this in capitalist countries? How many people vote in the United States, that extremely democratic country? Not even 50%.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Moreover, elections are held during the working week in the United States.

Comandante.- Yes, because if it's a working day, they don't let the workers vote, many large business owners act in the same way.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- And the deputies are professionals, which they are not here.

Comandante.- Where?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- In the United States and in other countries, members of Parliament don't work, here they have to continue working as teachers, doctors, workers.

Comandante.- In those countries, many of them are experts in giving themselves pay rises.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- And Cuba assuming the presidency of CELAC was very good, and January 28, Comandante.

Comandante.- Yes, of course. I was able to witness it all on television. **Journalist Gladys Rubio.-** And are you not writing?

Comandante.- I will answer you with pleasure, but first let me express my opinion on an event I judge to be of interest. Today I was reading a news agency report affirming that, in the Spanish Pyrenees, they had found remains of Neanderthal Man, from 200,000 years ago, in a cave in that area. It was also affirmed that he was more intelligent than Homo Sapiens. In previous reports they affirmed that a third species also formed part of the current human. Scientists are discussing and disagreeing on these issues.

Other agency reports, with more immediate consequences, are related to the colonization of planets and asteroids. A private Dutch company is planning the colonization of Mars. It is recruiting young people in order to train them. They believe it would be like coming to this hemisphere from Spain. However, these individuals have to travel with a commitment not to return, to remain in the colonization process of Mars, which has a different orbit and gravity, insufficient air density, and, how nice!, the company is recruiting young people. There are people who are going for it without a care. This is the kind of news that the press is talking about more and more, and which indicates the uncertain prospect of the human adventure.

There are other news items, increasingly more realistic, derived from precise and irrefutable calculations. The world population is growing, at a rate never imagined during hundreds of thousands of years. It took the long period of more than 1,500 centuries to reach almost one billion inhabitants in 1800; a century later, in 1900, it reached 1.65 billion; 50 years later, in 1950, the figure rose to 2.518

billion; in 1975, 4.088 billion; to 6.070 billion in 2000; and to 7.000 billion in 2011. The world population is now growing by more than 100 million persons per year. This incredible figure will continue increasing. There is a great ignorance about the world in which we live. A considerable number of people know nothing about these issues.

On the other hand, throughout human history, it has never been possible to avoid wars.

Weapons are being developed at an accelerated rate. Cannon fired missiles propelled by electromagnetic waves are reaching distances in excess of 200 kilometers. The most developed countries are reporting on unimagined advances in science and technology in the service of destruction and death.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- You were speaking precisely of the end of the human species, and have presented important warnings to the world about this possibility.

Comandante.- The last World War led to bombs dropped on the civilian population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which killed hundreds of thousands of persons and exposed a greater number to radiation.

A nuclear winter, incompatible with human survival, would result from the use of only a small portion of the nuclear weapons held by the powers which possess them. You also start to think about these problems because you have time. When you are caught up in daily life, you don't have much.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- And the world can avoid this, humans can avoid war if they want to, Comandante.

Comandante.- I think homo sapiens has not evolved sufficiently to avoid war, instincts and egoism unfortunately prevail in relations.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- And the drones.

Comandante.- Imperialism and its allies have made the military industry the most prosperous and privileged sector of its economy. Every day some news item is published about the most incredible artifacts to destroy and kill; codes are developed for their use; the rights of people, developed over centuries have been swept aside. Kill and destroy, with no limit whatsoever, is the philosophy.

As is logical, such an attitude has generated a reaction among adversary countries with sufficient technological and scientific development to manufacture weapons capable of counteracting, or even overcoming such weapons.

What is going to happen in Japan about the islands they stole from China.

What are the yankis going to gain by protecting Japan on this issue? Since, until now, as I understand, this point has not been included in the protection agreement. Now, the United States government states that yes, they are included, provoking great tension in the area. Some newspapers have editorialized that the Chinese are preparing to defend themselves in the event of any intolerable provocation on the part of their traditional adversaries. If you have time, you can become informed about these problems and study them.

Have wars ever in history been avoided? And the October [Missile] Crisis? Very close we were to becoming the nuclear battle field then. And later in southern Africa, when we were defending Angola from the racist South African troops? There were 50,000 men there, Cubans and Angolans. Two times we've been in danger of a war facing nuclear weapons.

You were talking to me about the meeting in Chile.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- CELAC .

Comandante.- CELAC was a step forward. This advance is owed, to a great extent, to Venezuela, especially the efforts of Chávez. Chávez is one of the people who has done the most for the freedom and unity of this continent. First

Bolívar. If you analyze it, you'll see that Bolívar and Martí had the same ideas... as Raúl explained, when he spoke about the statements Martí made about Bolívar. There was a tremendous brotherhood.

You've seen the campaigns they are mounting against Chávez in Venezuela, a horrible thing. We have always been very close, Venezuelans and Cubans; the bourgeoisie from here went to Miami or to Venezuela, which was a country with more resources than ours. Chávez has developed enormous prestige. The people responded and it's not just a question of slogans, because they say, "This transportation is now ours, I have a house that I never had, I have employment I never had, I have schools, I have hospitals, I have hope that I never had." He did it all for his people.

When he was in full battle, he forgot about his health and dedicated himself to the struggle. He is a good example, inspired by Bolívar and the heroic history of his people. Bolívar took his ideas about independence and his soldiers from the shores of the Caribbean Sea to Argentina's borders. That's what Ayacucho meant, the place where the colonial empire's spine was broken.

More than half of the population died. He was the only one of the great figures of history who acquired prestige freeing peoples. The others set about conquering fame and wealth, from Alexander the Great to Napoleon Bonaparte.

Napoleon went from being a revolutionary to emperor of France. He invaded Russia. Maybe you saw the film War and Peace, you also saw Liberación. These are works which teach a lot.

However, well... When are the next elections? (He is told that it will be a while, that these elections are general.) Well, I have to remember that you have been here since this morning and ask you to forgive my ignorance.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- No, the people are going to be so happy to see you and to hear that you came here.

Comandante.- And I was not aware, because, just imagine, you have things to do, it doesn't matter how many days or months or years you have, it's not something that concerns me, but taking advantage of time does interest me and attending to you is the best use of my time. Now, tell me, and ask whatever you wish.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Well, just imagine, we are touched. It has been wonderful to meet you here today. We thought Santiago was coming with the ballots.

Comandante.- Yes, he was coming...

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- We thought Santiago was coming and when we saw you, we said, "¡Ay!" It has been a unique opportunity.

Comandante.- Well, for me this is called good luck. I would have been enormously shamed, and worse, I would have missed the opportunity to speak freely with you about the issues that interest you.

Now, tell me, what do you know about how things are going in the rest of the country?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Up until now, good, more than 77%, as of the last report at 4:00 pm.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.-As of the 2:00pm report, 77% of voters had already voted.

Comandante.- Oh, yes.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.-We have to take into account the fact that it has rained, but 77% is good.

Comandante.- But it wasn't Hurricane Flora.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.-No, no, just a little sprinkle.

Comandante.- A bit of cold water.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- But 77% is a lot, right, for 2:00 in the afternoon.

Comandante.- How much was it on other occasions? How much, the other times? Those of you who keep statistics.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- For 2:00 pm, this is pretty good, on other occasions it's been 95%, but at the end of the day, we don't know yet. For this time of day, it's good.

Comandante.- We're not going to become a society like before, in which the people didn't go to vote.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- No, we have a people that responds, Comandante, that loves you, and Raúl.

Comandante.- I'm sure of that. I'm sure that our people is a truly revolutionary people and has made enormous sacrifices. I don't have to prove it, history has proven it, 50 years of the blockade and they have not been able, nor will they be able, [to break us]. As Maceo said, whoever attempts to take possession of Cuba will collect the dust from its soil soaked in blood, I think that's more or less what he said. And that's the way it is, one lives better free, but one must learn to be free. And you are revolutionary when you can continually improve the experience and constantly do things better. At times we all bear responsibility, because we begin with absolute ignorance, which is what still exists in the world. You don't find a solution because there isn't one; there are hundreds, in accordance with the culture, the beliefs, the geography of each country.

Self-interest, egoism, instincts cannot prevail. Nature gives us instincts and our capacity to reason should give us ethics.

Fabiola López.- What do you think, Comandante, of the changes taking place in the country?

Comandante.- You say changes, but the big change was the Revolution. What changes are you referring to?

Fabiola López.- No, I mean the changes taking place with the Guidelines and everything being done to update socialism.

Comandante.- Well, in general I believe it is our duty to update and improve it, but it's about a period in which it is imperative to move forward very carefully, we must not commit errors. We are coming out of a very unique era, very complex historically; life over these 50 years should have taught us something. The country which has come closest to a profound revolution, in the neighborhood of the empire, is Cuba. Not everything has worked out perfectly, but improving and extending what we have done is an inescapable obligation.

When I say to you that, in our society, journalists bear a great responsibility, and they must therefore be very studious, I'm telling you an objective fact fraternally, not criticizing you. Of course, I believe my conduct has been focused on what I strictly have to do. I have no illusion that everything is going to

work out well, that it's perfect, that it's the last word on social organization.

It's not possible for every province to aspire right now to have institutions similar to the most developed, at a time when the country must devote its greatest efforts to producing food, given the problems which the world is going to have to face very soon.

Recently, I met with some compañeros who work with livestock to exchange impressions about the production of essential foodstuffs, an issue about which I have thought a great deal recently.

Who is controlling the rapid growth of the world's population? One could say that we have the opposite problem, because the United States, using the high salaries of a rich, developed country, takes our young, qualified university-trained work force. They take doctors from us, for example, not the best ones. I know where the best are, they are here and they are everywhere fulfilling their sacred duty.

They will never be able to make a crack in the iron-clad spirit of the new Cuba. You have gone about gathering experiences... Well, they told me what happened to you, Gladys, over there, I think in Ecuador, to report on the self-less work being done by our collaborators.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- You're going to get the boots business out of me.

Comandante.- The boots and the overloaded trucks, the boat that couldn't cross the river, the remains of it which almost ended up in the Atlantic Ocean, at the mouth of the Amazon.

You also know about the continent's problem, that's why the CELAC meeting is of such importance; it was a great step forward. We need more than 10 minutes – well, in 10 minutes you can't listen to a speech – it would take 10 hours and 20 speeches to understand how each person thinks. But from their faces, if you observe the participants' faces, you can see how those from the Caribbean think, how the participant from Bolivia thinks, how another one thinks.

The CELAC meeting served to host another one between Latin American and Caribbean and European Union leaders.

Sometimes I converse with some of them who come, many of them, given the interest one might have.

I don't know when they sleep or when European political leaders go home.

Merkel, when does she rest? I see her in one meeting after another, she's never in Germany. Then the British, now they want to join, when things have gone well for them sabotaging the currency. Who understands them? Is there a solution for the 26% unemployment rate in Spain? Is there a solution for the bribing? All of these countries are awash with problems. Who pays for all of this, the hunger of the rest, the poverty?

With regards to our Revolution, I have to say that Marx, who didn't much like speeches or prophesizing, told us in his famous 1875 Critique of the Gotha Program, that in the first stage of a social revolution, wealth is distributed according to the principle of "from each according to his capacity; to each according to his work." In a second stage, the formula would be, "From each according to his capacities; to each according to his needs!" That's how I want to answer your question, Fabiola.

When one has time to think, it's easier to think. I want to contribute as much as possible to unity, to reasoning; I will always be opposed to complacency, because human beings tend toward complacency.

I hope you're not disheartened with what I'm telling you, my intention is the opposite. When is the next election?

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- In five years, I think.

Comandante.- Compadre!, That seems like a long time to me! (Laughter).

Ivia Pérez Reyes. -Well, two years until the partials, five years until the general election.

Comandante.- Well, I'll have to go to a pioneros congress.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- No, there's a journalists' one, too.

Journalist.- The journalists' congress is coming up soon.

Journalist.- Look, we're inviting you.

Journalist.- You're a journalist, you can come to the congress.

Comandante.- When is it?

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- July 14, you're invited, Comandante.

Comandante.- Ah, the 14th! When was the storming of the Bastille?

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- Exactly. Listen, you have a... this very date.

Comandante.- Very good!

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- You're already invited.

Comandante.- When you mentioned July 14, I remembered the French Revolution. What would have happened, in the era of Robespierre, if people had had television?

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- No, no, this would have been...

Comandante.- Just imagine the assassination of Robespierre. Robespierre no, they executed him after the French Revolution began to retreat after excessive extremism. You can unleash ideas, but you can't control them; you try to guide yourself as little as possible by instinct and as much as possible with knowledge.

I'm willing to come, if I can. Are there stairs to climb?

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- No, no, no, no way.

Comandante.- Where are you going to hold the congress?

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- In Cojímar, at the Cojímar cadre school. There aren't any stairs there.

Comandante.- That's where we began the training of students from Timor Leste; all the doctors Timor needed must have graduated by now. And when will there be global awareness?

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- It's so needed!

Comandante.- So that no one says, "I own the light, I own the air." The concept of ownership of resources essential to life still prevails. When will humanity see itself as one single family?

Well, if I can, I'll be happy to come to your Congress.

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- In any event, you have a standing invitation, before that, to discuss these issues and the importance of the press you referred to. We are at your service, always available to discuss the issue.

Comandante.- It's one of the issues... something very real.

We have good journalists now. Because journalism here isn't a dirty business, or the like, as you have seen, the fascist newspaper in Spain attacks Venezuela every day with gross insults. The first thing I see every day are some 20 to 30 news dispatches, the most important selected by a group of compañeros familiar with this task, who put together those that can be accessed by various means.

The news from China is increasingly interesting. Coming up is a meeting which will last several weeks, about the election of the Communist Party of China's central leadership.

I met Xi Jinping when he visited our country a few months ago. I spoke with him at length, especially about the vital importance of food production. He is no doubt a very capable man. I had the privilege of meeting Hu Jintao, as well, as I did likewise with Jiang Zemin.

China is an amazing country, with a hard-working, very intelligent people. There's a myth that the Chinese don't pronounce the "rr" when they learn Spanish from Spanish-speaking neighbors; when they learn in a language school, they learn Spanish better than any of us. The difficult and complex Chinese language, with thousands of characters, contributes, in my opinion, to the development of their intelligence. Really, human beings are the only species known whose intelligence continues to grow for some time after birth.

Well, I don't want to go on too long, I'm going to seriously think about the possibility of meeting with you.

How many days is your congress going to last?

Ivia Pérez Reyes.-The Congress, two days.

Comandante.- And I imagine it will be made public.

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- Yes, of course.

Comandante.- If not, Telesur will take care of making it public.

Journalist.- Yes, definitely, definitely.

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- No, all the media.

Comandante.- Please forgive me, because I selected some spokespersons here.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- No, it's all right. Don't worry.

Comandante.- You will admit that that they are trained people and can have a lot of influence, this doesn't mean underestimation.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- No, not at all.

Comandante.-Although women are constantly winning more power, due to the greater social power than us which they have, but don't tell me they are more revolutionary.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- But they are stronger, yes.

Comandante.- Women are, yes, but I'm not talking about Cuban women, I'm talking about women everywhere.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- We are the third country with the most women in Parliament.

Comandante.- I think that the English have beaten us. The Queen of England was on the throne for 60 years and they made her a little gift of 500,000 square kilometers, do you know where? In the Antarctic.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Imagine that!

Comandante.- There are claims about that. They have the South Pole divided among a group of nations. There's no other alternative; the Queen will have to be named sovereign of the Pole. (Laughter) Perfect.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Thank you very much for everything. Thank you for approaching us. We are very happy about that.

In chorus.- Thank you very much, Comandante.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- We are all very happy, and the people are going to be very happy about this.

Comandante.- You want me to tell you something? I have freed myself of the bitterness that all that would have produced in me.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Have a very good afternoon, Comandante.

Comandante.- Good, and what about yourselves?

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- We'll be here.

Comandante.- Which newspaper do you represent?

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- I'm here for Juventud Rebelde, Comandante.

Comandante.- Hey, and you have better paper!

Journalist.- Yes.

Comandante.- You can't read Granma sometimes, it has very small print.

Journalist.- And can you see without glasses, Comandante?

Comandante.- Yes, I can even see figures; however, on television, those small letters are hard work for me, and changes of light upset my vision.

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- Have a look so you can see that these letters are placed randomly. See that there is no name?

Comandante.- One turned up here, from which newspaper?

Journalist.- Me? Radio Metropolitana, Radio Metropolitana, the city radio.

Comandante.- Havana radio?

Journalist.- Havana radio.

Comandante.- Which are the ones that talk about agriculture?

Journalist.- About agriculture. In Havana there's isn't much talk about agriculture.

Comandante.- Hang on. I've been told there is one.

Journalist.- Radio Cadena Havana, which is the radio for Mayabeque and Artemisa provinces.

Comandante.- Ah.

Journalist.- It's called Radio Cadena Habana.

Comandante.- Who is the editor?

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- No, we wouldn't know the name of the editor.

Comandante.- Which one is it? Don't you know which one talks about agriculture?

Journalist.- No, the radio station editor, he's saying, we don't know the name of the editor of the radio station. But this radio station talks a lot about agriculture, Radio Cadena Habana.

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- Yolanda París. The editor of Radio Cadena Habana is Yolanda París. And there's also Radio Mayabeque and Radio Artemisa, which also talk about agriculture a lot, because they are the radio stations of the new provinces.

Comandante.- I was in contact with Lugo [Orlando Lugo Fonte, former president of ANAP] and I still am. Lugo knows the best agriculturalists, Lazarito, from Bejucal; the other is a man from Cienfuegos, who produces goats' milk, Regino, he's a tremendous campesino producer. I asked him, "And the slaughtering, how do you handle that? Well, he told me, "There a number of us producers and we take turns. And, for example, I now have a milking machine."

Regino used to milk 148 goats by hand every day. An adult son helped him, and another one, who is at school and aged 8 or 10, milked 40 goats. "They've upset me, because now they've got the milking machine and gotten me out of practice," the child claims... now he's had to spend more time studying.

Lugo knows the best campesinos and cooperative workers. He has collaborated in the distribution of seeds. There are some plants which can be sown in the millions, the problem is knowing the possibilities, the value and the cost of production. It's complex, but very promising.

Journalist Miguel Mauri.- There's the AIN [National News Agency] as well.

Comandante.- Tell her that I'd like to converse with her as well. (He is referring to the editor of Radio Cadena Habana) I have information on the principal farms. Buffaloes produce double the meat per day in the feedlot, and with less fat. Alfredo, an intelligent and serious campesino from Alquizar, told me that.

This valuable animal didn't exist in Cuba. In 1983, Torrijos [former president of Panama] gave us 25 females and two males of the Bufalypso breed, known as water buffalo. Between 1983 and 1986 Cuba acquired 241 females and 31 males of the same breed; and between 1987 and 1989, our country bought 2,648 females and 57 males of the Carabao breed, known as swamp buffalo. When buffaloes don't have pasture they break down fences to find food.

However, it's the only animal that can live in swampy and inhospitable areas. Within a few years they multiplied; they didn't suffer from the excessive use of artificial insemination, a high level of females who did not gestate, nor a high percentage of calves that died of malnutrition. Small dairies were created in places visible from the principal roads, which produced milk and cheese from docile cow buffaloes. This animal, which constitutes the principal source of milk and meat in countries like Vietnam and other Asian nations, had been cast aside. The country is going to fight to make available all potential sources of milk and meat from herds of cows, goats, buffalo, hogs, poultry and rabbits.

In relation to food production of animal or vegetable origin one has to implement demanding and consistent principles in terms of health, which our homeland is in a position to undertake.

For example, what is the country which produces the most food? China produces and consumes hundreds of millions of hogs per year. It cannot provide the bovine meat of Canada, the United States, Brazil, Argentina and Australia, which have four times more territory with less than half of the Chinese population, or perhaps even less, given that much of Chinese territory in the north and east of the country is desert or mountainous.

Our institutions, specialists and scientists must have in-depth knowledge of all the diseases which can affect animals and plants.

We can never forget La Coubre [This was the explosion in the Port of Havana, of a ship bearing an arms shipment acquired in Belgium, on March 4, 1960], when we bought arms in Belgium, in order not to give them political pretexts for what they did against Cuba. The ship left, was loaded and made a stopover in a French port, where the explosives were planted aboard. There were two explosions. After the first charge exploded, when the boxes were being unloaded, and when the many victims were already being treated or people were fighting the fires, there was a second explosion. More than 100 workers died and hundreds of people were injured.

The problem we have with mass artificial insemination is that the average gestation is barely 50%. We have to find a solution to this issue. On many occasions, when the impregnating bull discovers the cow in heat, the inseminator is resting or doing something else indispensable; many heats are lost and more resources spent.

We have to use methods that promote more gestations at lower cost, reserving more sophisticated techniques for herds receiving less attention, and allowing natural reproduction where appropriate conditions do not exist.

Another problem is related to the calves, often subjected to an absurd regime of insufficient, poor quality food before being launched into searching for low quality pasture, where even as many as 30% of them die and they take twice as long to become productive.

It is essential to sow pasture of proven quality, both grasses and other pasture crops with high amino acid and protein levels, and which have been developed by experts. Among countless measures to be adopted, these are the most urgent.

I wouldn't be talking about this if I didn't have the profound conviction that it is totally in the hands of our workers in this sector to immediately resolve them, which they wish to do, given the importance of healthy protein feed as long as life lasts on our planet. These principles are generally applicable to all agricultural production.

I hope to see you. You can ask me there anything you want. Search out books and ask me whatever questions you like, when I don't know something, I will tell you so with total frankness.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- And the problem of water.

Comandante.- Well, now I have a lot of hope, and that is another reward for having had the good fortune to come. You are the spokespersons of the Revolution.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Finally, Comandante, Radio Rebelde is about to celebrate its 55th anniversary on February 24. What message do you have for that anniversary?

Comandante.- Ah, that's the old Radio Rebelde.

Journalist.- Founded, as you will recall, in the Sierra Maestra by you, the rebel leaders.

Comandante.- and how the aircraft tried to find it! But let me tell you that you can't have such things now, because it's enough to have a radio turned on for them to send a missile straight at you and that's the end of the story. Someone will have to invent a way to counteract that technique. Our guerrilla movement, before we had Radio Rebelde, waged countless victorious battles. Our little radio station, rigorously informing people of the truth, increased our strength and accelerated the victory.

Well, warm congratulations for them and the happiness of thinking that they have known how to fulfill their duty over so many years.

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- Comandante, a message for youth through the Juventud Rebelde newspaper.

Comandante.- That I'm very envious of them. (Laughter)

Journalist.- And for all the people, Comandante, say something now on this grand voting day for your people who love you so much.

Comandante.- Well, I must truthfully say that, for me, the people are everything. Without the people, we are nothing, without the people there would be no Revolution, with the people we will forge the path worthy of the homeland, we will defend the country, and if we have to die, then we will die.

Journalist.- Thank you, Comandante! Comandante, many thanks for coming.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- There are five months to go to the Journalists Congress.

Comandante.- Isn't there any meeting before?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- We've had the ones at the base level, but we'll be waiting for you with open arms.

Comandante.- Who are the people going to the Congress from all over the country and how many are going to meet?

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- Not many this time, right?

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- Two hundred and fifty, Jefe, are coming together from all over the country, not so many. But if you would like to meet with a small group before then, we can have a meeting, invite you, and we'll be there.

Comandante.- And are you the ones which select?

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- Well, we can select them.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Do you remember what we did one 26th of July? Exactly, and we talked about science, and we talked about the environment, agriculture, the world and whatever you want.

Comandante.- In any case, that wouldn't take away from...

Journalist .- Then you can go to the Congress, and we'll have two meetings.

Comandante.- Who are you going to make responsible? Let's talk with the compañera, who worked very hard, the one I already told you about, and she can commit herself to inviting you and some others from the sector who are interested, and then you won't have the responsibility, and then...

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- We can talk to Alfonso Borges, who is the person who attends to all the press, Alfonso Borges, who you know perfectly well.

Comandante.- Yes, why not? He sent me a large number of papers today. And Arcángel – he has a group – he was in that meeting I had with the campesinos. It was very good.

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- Well, Comandante, rest now.

Comandante.- I have work to do, but letting you go obliges me to...

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- It has been a very special time for us.

Journalist Ana T. Badía.- We are very happy.

Journalist Gladys Rubio.- Thank you for coming. Thank you very much.

Comandante.- What newspaper is he from?

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- That's my recorder, Comandante.

Journalist Evelio Tellería.- From Trabajadores newspaper.

Comandante.- Ah, it comes out once a week. I saw it yesterday.

Journalist Evelio Tellería.- We come out on Mondays.

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- Juventud Rebelde comes out today, Comandante.

Comandante.- How many copies do you print?

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- Us, 250,000 copies, Comandante.

Comandante.- Granma, how many?

Journalist.- Granma, more or less that figure, a little more.

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- No, Granma, 510,000, because 10,000 go to the tourism sector, and 500,000 for the population, centers, et cetera. The Sunday edition of Juventud Rebelde, 250,000, and the daily, 200,000.

Comandante.- Less on Sunday. Don't do that to me.

Ivia Pérez Reyes.- Yes, daily, and 250,000 on Sundays.

Journalist Amaury del Valle.- The Sunday edition has 16 pages instead of 8, with some longer articles, investigative, it's published with articles on agriculture, the ones you have talked about; the

challenges of agriculture in recent times and, above all, a focus more directed at youth.

Comandante.- Well, thank you very much indeed for what I have learnt today and the hope of talking more fully with all of you. See you soon. An embrace.

(¡Vivas! for the Comandante en Jefe)

(He inquires about the children guarding the ballot boxes).

Comandante.- Hey, you didn't tell me that they had removed the stairway.

Niurka Prada.- I did inform you. When I found out that you couldn't climb the steps, I prepared the conditions.

Comandante.- It's that nobody said anything to me. Tell me who it was so that I don't vote for the person responsible in the next elections.

Niurka Prada.- Well, never mind, in the next elections I'm going to have an armchair here, because I was worried that you, on your feet for so long...

Comandante.- Nobody told me that you were here either...

Niurka Prada.- It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, I'm always here for whenever you need me.

Comandante.- What are you doing?

Niurka Prada.- What you left me doing, I still haven't completed it.

Comandante.- ...

Niurka Prada.- I am on your staff. So look after me, I'm with you.

Comandante.- The Niña Bonita project. (Reservoir for breeding fish)

Niurka Prada.- Yes, I am directly involved with the Niña Bonita, the Siboney and all those things.

Comandante.- And I have new things.

Niurka Prada.- Shall I tell you an anecdote? I have spent two years asking for the Niña Bonita ... to be fixed. You passed the entrance in a minibus and the next day, they had fixed it when I arrived, so make a trip out there from time to time.

Comandante.- We'll see each other soon.

Niurka Prada.- OK. It's a great pleasure to see you, Comandante.

(Exclamations of Fidel, Fidel, Fidel!)

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