

[Echegoyen - Castro Interview](#)

Autor:

- [Castro Ruz, Fidel](#)

In our of the longest official interviews recorded in the history of the Uruguayan Foreign Ministry (47 minutes), Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro talked yesterday with the President of the National Government Council, Martin R. Echegoyen. The meeting was proceeded by a certain confusion in the morning, when the original time of 6 P.M.

was changed at the request of Castro to 8:30 (at 5 o'clock he was to speak at a public gathering in the Municipal Esplanade). The Foreign Ministry and Echegoyen agreed to the change, but at 5:30, it was again announced that the interview would be at 6 o'clock, creating an atmosphere of confusion among the Cuban delegates headed by Santiago Riera, Castro's public relations officer. The Prime Minister had been spending one of those sleepless stays which have made him famous in Cuba and among the journalist of the western world. From 1:45 on Monday, when he returned from a televised interview, until 5, he had talked and chatted with friends over a vast meal of meat braised in the local fashion. From 5 to 8, he rested briefly. At 9, he departed for the flooded Rincon del Bonete sector, where there was an intensive whirl of visits, luncheons, interviews and homage rendered throughout the morning and part of the afternoon. At 4:30, people were already beginning to arrive at the place where the gathering was scheduled. At 5:45, some tens of thousands were waiting in the Esplanade, while half a dozen anguished Cubans (among them, Secretary Concepcion Fernandez, diplomatic personnel and two stock custodians of the peculiar Tyrolian hats which the 26 July Movement in New York had sent to the leader) were waiting in Room 2006 and three national councillors were waiting in the Red Room of the Government House. The thousands in the Esplanade wanted to hear a true Latin America hero in person. The anguished Cubans were waiting for the hero to take off his muddy boots and change his battle dress for the commander's uniform he first wore in Washington, and the councillors were awaiting the arrival of the most spectacular head of state in the recent political history of the continent.

Fidel Castro is noted for his sturdy sense of realism, his indifference to protocol and his inclination to discuss his plans for agrarian reform in familiar fashion and with the amazing candor of the countryman than to attend formal ceremonies. An apprehensive realization of this fact was reflected in many glances as 6 o'clock approached and, located in opposite parts of the city, and perhaps with opposite points of view, 40,000 spectators and a council president awaited the young revolutionary.

The situation was resolved by Castro himself, in characteristic fashion. At 5:58, the two or three thousand persons who had gathered in front of the Victoria Plaza Hotel heard the police sirens which announced the arrival of the Prime Minister's car, and they craned their necks in vain. No car appeared along 18 July, nor Florida, nor Juncal.

Unexpectedly, the caravan emerged from the avenue by the Citadel and stopped the caravan emerged from the avenue by the Citadel and stopped directly in front of Government House. To the accompaniment of the bugles of the Lancers' Guard, Fidel Castro emerged from a red automobile, just as rumbled as Concepcion Fernandez,

who was watching from her window on the 20th floor of the Hotel Victoria Plaza, had feared. The Prime Minister had kept his appointment with President Echegoyen, certain that the 40,000 waiting in the Esplanade would understand his reasons.

Under the famous Artigas by Merrera in the Reception Room, Castro sat down with Echegoyen, who was wearing a conservative dark business suit. Awkwardly, he put his officer's cap on his knees and loosened the fastening of his campaign jacket, while his hand went instinctively to the open collar of his olive drab shirt, a garment somewhat in violation of protocol. But the robust, bearded commander's feeling of awkwardness, facing the serious men of the jurist and president of the council, lasted only a moment. Echegoyen's proverbial courtesy broke the ice and launched Castro on one of his famous statements on continental politics, from which only the affectionate hand on the shoulder of his interlocutory and the Cuban phrase "look, son..." (as on the previous day in the Foreign Ministry) were lacking. Near Echegoyen and the Prime Minister were seated council member Eduardo Victor Haedo, Ministers Martinez Montero and Berro, Secretary Sanchez Morales and Colonels Tanco and Quadros, the latter an aide assigned to Castro. No minority council member was present.

The President and the Prime Minister talked for the first few minutes in low voices, further muffled by the whirl of the cameras and the murmur of the journalists and government officials filling the room. The talk, in general, was dominated by Castro, a conversationalist skilled in rhetoric, and his interlocutor did not express himself at length. The first subject, naturally, was the Commission of the 21, and in particular, Fidel's thesis concerning the need to reevaluate this type of gathering.

Echegoyen: This idea you set forth in Buenos Aires, Mr. Prime Minister, is in all our minds. It is a fact that there is little identification between these international gatherings and the national spirit in many countries.

Castro: Yes, the peoples have lost faith. But it can be revived. In order to plan economic development, it is first necessary to unite all the social classes.

Echegoyen (pensively): Well said. Given the disinclination of the President to speak and the semi-enthusiastic expectation of the Ministers, Councillor Haedo set forth his obvious interest in Fidel's personal experience.

Haedo: Do you find support of your view in the United States?

Castro: Certainly, yes, but the important thing is to keep this concept in the public mind. If this can be done, we will have support for a long time.

Haedo: Does this support come from all sectors?

Castro: Basically, they all know that we are right. But the large companies, certain circles which practice outdated economic theories, still have influence. They are in the minority, certainly, but they are powerful. However, the problem must be set forth: if we do not set them forth clearly and explain them, how can we hope to be heard?

Private investments, one of the theoretical points concerning free enterprise which Fidel Castro has criticized most had an opponent in Dr. Berro, who was following the conversation closely.

Castro: The plans must be specific. In the international gatherings, we talk a great deal, we study a great deal, but we never find solutions. And almost always it is a question of private investments, which are not the same and are difficult to control.

Berro: Obviously. And also, their main purpose is profit.

Castro: Yes, and they create conflicts and resolve nothing.

Berro: That is true.

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Published on FIDEL Soldier of Ideas (<http://www.comandanteenjefe.org>)

Also on the subject of economics, Castro briefly and specifically set forth his ideas about foreign capital. The question was raised by Haedo, in connection with Kubitschek and his investment plans.

Castro: No country can fail to accept certain truths about foreign investments. There is a solution for all countries, and the Pan American Operation is a step forward in this connection.

Haedo: Either a general solution is sought, or nothing is done...

Castro: What country can fail to go along with this scheme? There are only three ways of getting capital: either we save it, or we accept private capital, or we ask for financing from official or international organs. The first is impossible, because it would mean the establishment of restrictions by the US, and there are many internal interests...

Haedo: Yes, the farmers, the spinning mills...

Castro: As to the second, private investment is difficult to manage and to channel productively toward the most obvious needs of the country. Only the third solution remains, but to ask for this kind of aid we must establish a common economic front.

Berro (enthusiastically): An economic front and a front of nationalities!

Once Castro had concluded his extensive economic explanation, President Echegoyen interpolated an elegy.

Echegoyen: Mr. Prime Minister, you have given a very beautiful and full demonstration of your talent as a statesman.

Castro: Oh, it is not so great.

The next subject was Castro's trip to Rincon del Bonete. But first, Councillor Haedo attempted to satisfy his human curiosity.

Haedo: How have you been treated in Uruguay?

Castro: Just as in Cuba. And really even better than in Cuba. They applaud me just as much, but they do not ask me for anything.

Haedo: Have you tried bitter mate? Have you eaten our meat roasted in the skin?

Castro: Mate, no. I have tried the roast, but without the skin.

The Prime Minister said that he had been taken by the engineers to visit the dam and had inspected the engine room. He said that according to the technicians' reports, the repair of the generators would take six or seven months, and he added some interesting facts.

Castro: I was profoundly impressed by the fact that it is mainly your army which is organizing this task of rebuilding and helping the victims. For me, a Cuban, it was an agreeable surprise to see an army not killing civilians, but helping the peasants, and commanding the respect of all the citizens.

Haedo: How did the people in the rural sector strike you?

Castro: I felt as if I were in Cuba, as if I had suddenly arrived at some place in my province of Oriente. The peasants on their land are the same in all the countries of the world.

The interview, which proceeded as we have described, ended at 5:47. A few minutes earlier, Fidel

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Castro had somewhat timidly brought up a point which had already been mentioned to Secretary Sanchez Morales in the morning. The Prime Minister informed the government of a donation to be given for those victimized by the floods.

Castro: Mr. President, I also want to tell you that a few days ago I spoke in New York before international organs about the catastrophe which struck Uruguay, and I announced that Cuba wants to help in repairing the damage. Unofficially, and as a contribution from the Cuban people, I am informing you that I will deposit the sum of 20,000 dollars to the government account before leaving Montevideo. This sum comes from the Agrarian Reform Fund, and represents the contribution from the peasants of Cuba to those of Uruguay.

Echegoyen: Our profound thanks. I will inform the government council of your touching generosity.

After posing with the Prime Minister for some photographs, requested in particular by Miss Beatriz Haedo, the daughter of the National Council member, Castro left to attend the gathering in the Esplanade. As he emerged a large crowd was chanting his name, and Castro waved to the people before getting into his automobile.

Lugar:

Uruguay

Fecha:

05/05/1959

Source URL: <http://www.comandanteenjefe.org/en/entrevistas/echegoyen-castro-interview>