

[First Speech by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz on Radio Rebelde, April 14, 1958](#) **[1]**

Date:

14/04/1958

To public opinion in Cuba and to the free people in Latin America.

I have been marching day and night without rest from the Column No. 1 area of operations under my command, to be present at this appointment with the rebel radio station.

It's hard for me to leave my men at this time, even for just a few days. But speaking to the people is also a duty and a need that I could not fail to fulfill.

As hateful as tyranny is in all its aspects, none of them is so irritating and crudely cynical as the absolute control that it has imposed on all the media for disseminating printed, radio and television news.

Censure is so disgusting in itself, and it becomes much more disgusting when it's used not only to try but also to hope to hide the truth from the people about what has happened, through the partial and exclusive use of all common means of communication, to make the people believe whatever better suits the safety of their executioners.

While they are concealing the truth at all costs, they report lies by all means.

The people do not hear news other than the dispatch by the Staff of the Dictatorship. The outrage of censorship is imposed on the press together with the outrage of lies. And those same newspapers and broadcasters, upon which a severe and vigilant inquisitor prevents the publication of any real news, are obliged to inform and issue all that the dictatorship reports. The organs of opinion are snatching the people to turn them into vehicles of oppression. Tyranny constantly tries to deceive the people, as if the mere fact of denying any information, which does not go to the people from official sources, were sufficient to invalidate all their information.

And whom will the people believe? The criminals who tyrannize the people, the traitors who snatched the Constitution and the people's liberties, those who censure the press and prevent the free publication of the most insignificant news? Clumsy folks, if you think about it, because you can force a people to everything, but never to believe!

When the real history of this struggle will be written and every event that took place with the official dispatches of the regime will be confronted, then it will be understood to what extent tyranny is capable of corrupting and debasing the institutions of the Republic, to what extent the forces at the service of evil are capable of reaching the extremes of criminality and barbarism, to what extent a mercenary soldiery without ideology can be deceived by its own chiefs. What does it matter after all to the despots and executioners of the people to deny history? What worries them is to get out of the way and

postpone the inevitable fall.

I do not think that the General Staff lies in shame.

The General Staff of the Cuban Army has shown it has no shame whatsoever.

The General Staff lies by interest; it lies to the people and to the army; it lies to avoid demoralization in the army's ranks; the General Staff lies because it refuses to recognize before the world its military incapacity, its condition of mercenary chiefs, sold out to the most dishonorable cause that can be defended; it lies because it has been unable, despite its tens of thousands of soldiers and the immense material resources, to defeat a handful of men who rose up to defend the rights of the people. The mercenary rifles of the tyranny crashed against the idealistic rifles that do not collect any salary. Neither military technique, nor the academy, nor the most modern weapons were of any use to them.

The fact is that the military, when they do not defend the country but attack it instead, when they do not defend their people but instead they enslave the people, they cease to be an institution and they become an armed gang; they cease to be soldiers and become delinquents. And they stop deserving not only the salary they wrest from the sweat of the people, but even the sun that covers the earth they have bloodied with dishonor and cowardice.

These same military men who have never defended the Homeland from a foreign enemy, who have never won a medal on the battlefield, who owe their rank to treason, nepotism and crime, issue war dispatches announcing 10, 20, 30 and up to 50 compatriots killed by their homicidal weapons as if they were victories of the Homeland, as if every Cuban killed, because those are the casualties they announce, did not have brothers or children, a wife or parents. There would be enough people to wage a victorious war just with the relatives of those killed compatriots.

We have never murdered any enemy prisoners. We have never abandoned a wounded adversary on the battlefield; that is and always will be for us an honor and a mark of glory; we feel with pain the death of every adversary, even though our war is the fairest of wars because it is the war for freedom.

However, the Cuban people know that the struggle has been waged victoriously; the people of Cuba know that over seventeen months, since we disembarked with a handful of men who knew how to face up to the initial defeat without ceasing their patriotic enterprise, the Revolution has been growing incessantly; what was just a spark only one year ago is today an invincible blaze; the Cuban people know that we're no longer fighting alone in the Sierra Maestra from Cabo Cruz to Santiago de Cuba, but that there are people also in the Sierra Cristal from Mayarí to Baracoa, in the plain of the Cauto from Bayamo to Victoria de las Tunas, in the province of Las Villas from the Escambray Mountains to the Trinidad Mountains and in the mountains of Pinar del Río; in the very streets of cities and towns the people are fighting heroically; but above all, the people of Cuba know that the will and determination with which we began this fight remains unshakeable, they know that we are an army which emerged from nothing, that adversity does not discourage us, that after each setback the Revolution has reemerged with more strength; they know that the destruction of the Granma expeditionary

detachment would not be the end of the fight but the beginning. They know that the spontaneous strike that followed the assassination of our Comrade Frank País did not wipe out the tyranny but it marked the way for the organized strike; that no government can stay in power supported by the pile of corpses with whose blood the dictatorship drowns the new strike, because the hundreds of young people and workers who were killed during these days and the unprecedented repression unleashed against the people does not weaken the Revolution; it makes it stronger, more necessary, more invincible; that the blood spilled makes courage and indignation greater; that every comrade falling in the streets of the cities and on the battlefield awakens in their idealistic brothers an irresistible desire to also give their lives; every comrade who falls awakens the desire to fight in the indolent, it awakens the feeling of the Motherland bleeding for its dignity in the persons who are ambivalent and it awakens sympathy and the adhesion of all the peoples of the Americas.

No, those dispatches by the General Staff announcing clusters of corpses with tones of jubilation do not discourage anyone; they outrage the nation and stimulate it to fight.

They cannot discourage the people, not even when it's known that they are undertaking the worst of the fight, that enemy troops are being beaten along the line, that the latest victorious battles of our forces were fought four kilometers from Manzanillo in full daylight and in plain sight, imposing enormous casualties on the dictatorship. Let's not lie to ourselves; our worship of freedom and the decorum of man is the worship of truth as an additional right of the people, something that the despots do not know how to respect or fulfill.

Enemy casualties are in proportion of ten to one with respect to ours since this fight began.

When the General Staff announces the deaths of thirty, forty or even fifty rebels, they are invariably talking about defenseless peasants, arrested in their homes and mercilessly murdered. Many officers who command the dictatorship's troops in the Sierra Maestra have received their ranks this way. Promoting these assassins because of massacres perpetrated against defenseless compatriots has been put into practice and it has stimulated one of the most repugnant and inhuman procedures that can be conceived of in a war.

There are other heroic deeds of the dictatorship that have nothing to do with courage and military honor.

Desperate and impotent, they have put into practice the criminal tactics of systematically bombing and machine-gunning family homes. This measure, unexpected because of its absurdity, surprised the population living in the north of the Sierra without anti-aircraft shelters, and it has caused many victims.

Last Thursday on April 10th, after the combat at Pozón where a detachment of the dictatorship was completely destroyed as it was leaving Yara to pursue a rebel patrol that had attacked a convoy on the Manzanillo-Bayamo highway, three B-26 aircrafts, a jet and two light aircraft mercilessly attacked the

village of Cayo Espino for two hours; there was no military objective there. Not one single house escaped being hit by the shrapnel. An improvised blood bank and hospital in the rearguard with three doctors from the July 26th Movement provided medical care to the wounded who had to wait for night to be transferred. A five-year-old boy bled to death on the way lying on a crudely improvised surgical table, his legs ripped off by a 50-caliber bullet which had also wounded his two little sisters.

No spectacle has impressed us so much as that of the dying boy who, without crying, barely was able to call out to his grandmother to tell her that he had loved her very much, but "I could not love her anymore because I am going to die." It was as if this little child was aware of his sacrifice, as if he understood that he too was dying for detesting those barbarians who attack humble family homes with machine-guns.

Journalists from four countries witnessed, listened to and filmed that scene. Even though they were familiar with the toughness of this fight that event nevertheless infuriated them with indignation. Perhaps they were reminded of their own children. It was difficult to understand how Cuban hands were capable of perpetrating such a crime. What need was there for committing such barbarity? What military purpose could be achieved by attacking that defenseless hamlet many miles away from the scene of combat with machine-guns? What strange design guides the minds of barbarians who use the resources of the nation to carry out those horrors against their own people?

How much cowardice and cruelty of those pilots who, sitting comfortably in their aircraft, without any risk to their lives, murder innocent women and children!

But we have taken note of the day and the hour to demand the punishment they deserve when the moment comes to render accounts, and we mark their names and surnames with indelible stigma so that even their own children are ashamed of them. The pilots who machine-gunned Cayo Espino on April 10 at 3:40 p.m. are war criminals who dishonor the Cuban nation, but not the army which was shameless enough to be responsible for the crime of genocide it is committing against Cuba.

The defeats suffered aren't revenged in such a way! A revolution is not crushed in such a way! The memory of the dying child will never be erased from the minds of the peasants or those of our men when they go to battle. When the tyranny falls, there in Cayo Espino, we will erect a monument to the child Orestes Gutiérrez Peña, symbol of the innocents who have fallen; it will be a tribute of tender remembrance from our Liberating Army to the heroism of the children in whose minds affection and devotion for our combatants are unanimously present.

And next to the name of the innocent who was murdered, posterity will read the names of the pilots who murdered him. The peasant population has been instructed to construct anti-aircraft shelters urgently against the shrapnel and "napalm" bombs being used by the dictatorship.

If these events can be perpetrated by an armed government against its own citizens and people, it is necessary to understand that mankind has advanced very little in the efforts of protecting people from barbarism. There are the United States, with the weapons for Continental Defense used by its friends,

the dictators of America. These dictators will not tire of repeating the lie that we are "communists" to justify sending weapons as if they were the representatives of democracy, dignity and the most sacred rights of the men.

With the word democracy on the lips of tyrants, what a sad and shameless campaign they are carrying out against the oppressed peoples.

It is said that the sale of weapons to the Batista government has been canceled by the US State Department. But the results have not been changed in the least: the United States is selling arms to Somoza and Trujillo; Somoza and Trujillo sell arms to Batista. What does the Organization of American States do? Do the dictators have a right to conspire for massacring the Cuban people? And the democratic governments of America, the leaders and the democratic parties of the Continent, what are they doing with their arms crossed?

If dictators help each other, why shouldn't the people help each other? Are we not obliged to help the sincere democrats in all the Americas? Have we not paid dearly enough for the sin of our indifference to the concert of tyrants who promote the destruction of our democracies? Is it not clear that Cuba is fighting a battle for the democratic ideal of our continent? Do you not realize that the last dictators have turned Cuba into one of their last trenches? In Cuba one does not fight for the redemption of a single people but for the defense of a principle that concerns America. If the dictators help Batista, it is fair that the peoples of America help Cuba.

On behalf of the people of Cuba who are fighting against the weapons of Batista, Trujillo and Somoza, we demand help from the democratic governments of America. A huge territory on the southern coast of Oriente (Eastern) Province, between Cabo Cruz and Santiago de Cuba, is in the hands of our forces. Weapons that are parachuted in ten kilometers from the coast along that wide area will inevitably fall into our hands without the dictatorship intercepting them. We need automatic rifles, heavy machine guns, bazookas and mortars to advance to the capital. The Provisional Revolutionary Government will defray all the expenses that these shipments cause and the people of Cuba will be eternally grateful. We the Cuban rebels do not ask for food, we do not even ask for medicines; we ask for weapons to fight, to firmly establish in America that the will of a people is more powerful than the consortium of the dictatorship and its mercenary armies.

The revolutionary forces of the July 26th Movement will continue the offensive that began several weeks ago. Communications will be kept interrupted by our forces on the highways and railways of Oriente. The militias of the July 26th Movement must extend this measure to the rest of national territory prohibiting civilian traffic and constantly inflicting casualties on military elements that will inevitably be forced to move through them or leave the island. The war against transportation must be total and permanent; food supplies must be cut off altogether. The people should not travel on roads or railways to avoid the risks of being shot. To be effective the order to shoot must be against any vehicle that travels day or night, since the dictatorship uses the procedure of transporting soldiers dressed as civilians and any prior identification is impossible.

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

All forces and resources of the July 26th Revolutionary Movement must concentrate on that goal.

The repressive forces of the regime, not even its legion of confidants and traitors will be able to counter this progressive and total standstill in the country. Tyranny will have to suffer from the standstill, suffocation and hunger.

With this slogan I say goodbye to return to my men.

To all the columns operating in Oriente Province and to their commanders, our warm congratulations for the successes obtained.

To the militias of the July 26th Revolutionary Movement, our recognition and admiration for the heroism with which they are fighting in towns and cities.

To the rebels in Las Villas and the other nuclei in the rest of the island, our fraternal and encouraging greeting. To the people of Cuba, the security that this fortress will never be defeated, and our oath that the country will be free or even the last combatant will die.

Fidel Castro Ruz

Commander in Chief of the July 26th Revolutionary Forces

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