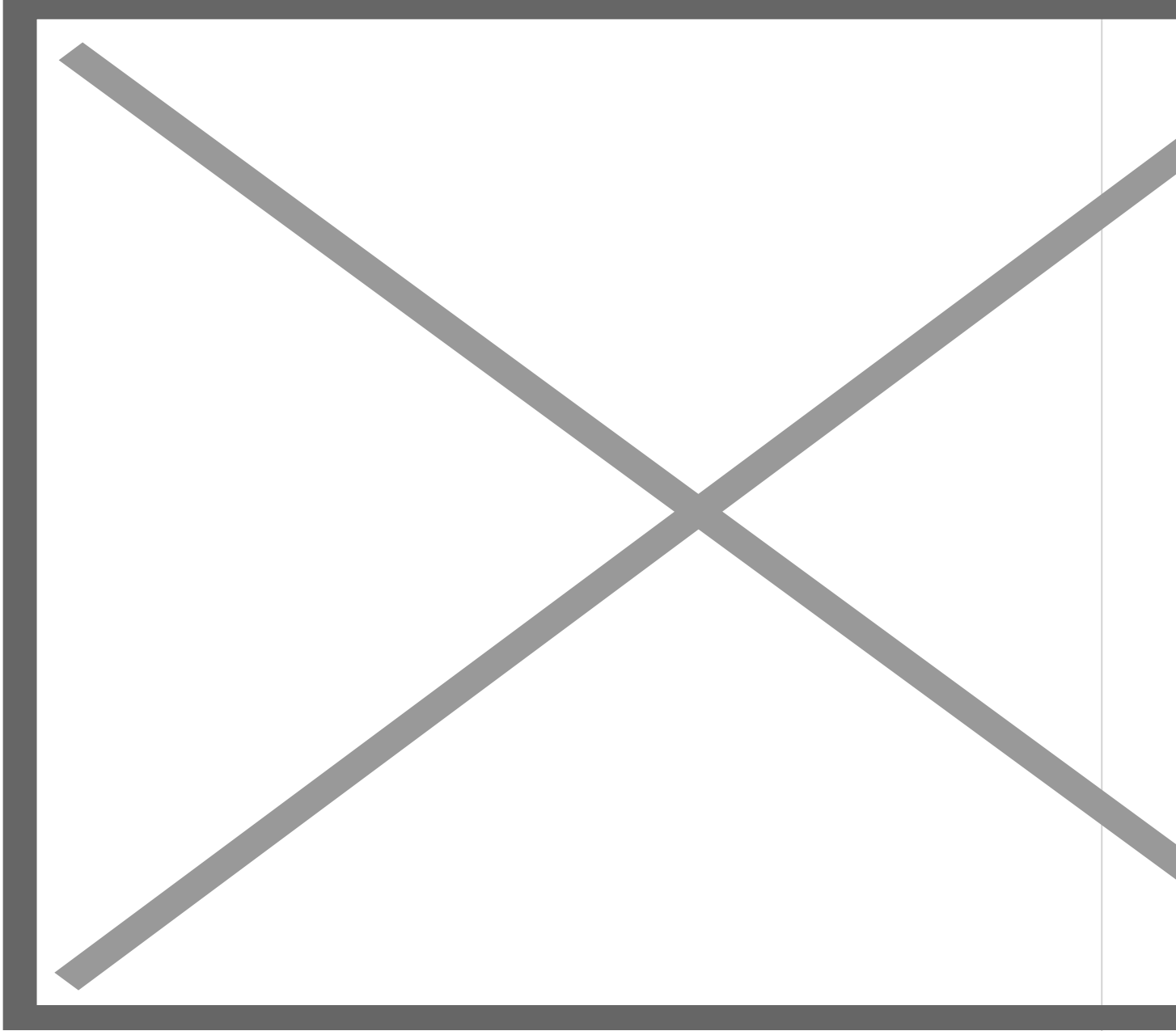


*Havana Book Fair: A unique  
experience for MEP  
Massimiliano Smeriglio*

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**Photo: Prensa Latina**

Havana, February 21 (RHC)-- How did it go at the Book Fair? With this question began, on Monday afternoon, the dialogue between the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, and the Member of the European Parliament, who is visiting Cuba on the occasion of the presentation of his book "Se bruciasse la città" (The city is burning), which took place in the context of the recently concluded XXXI International Book Fair of Havana.

"It has been a unique experience. The presence of young people was incredible. We are not used in Europe to see so many young people with books in their hands", said Smeriglio, and added that he has a very positive impression, especially in relation to the policy of book prices, education for reading, and how the event travels through all the provinces of the country.

In a fraternal meeting, the Head of State expressed to the visitor the satisfaction of his return to Cuba, after his last visit to the island in October-November last year, when he also held talks with the dignitary.

President Díaz-Canel commented that the book festival visited by the MEP has not had the editorial capacity of other editions, due to the economic situation the country is going through, however, the celebration of this event, which is a family event, has not been renounced.

To the friend of the Island, who has developed a work of support to Cuba in the fight against the blockade, the president explained the background of the strong literary tradition that has amazed him.

He spoke about Fidel and the creation, only three months after the Triumph of the Revolution, of the National Printing House, directed by a cultured man like Alejo Carpentier, and recalled that the first book published after 1959 was "The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha". The arguments of the Head of State followed a timeline, but he did not lose the protagonist, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, who created the Book Fairs during the programs of the Battle of Ideas, the leader who worked to make Cuba a cultured people, the one who did not tell the people to believe, but to read.

Host and visitor agreed on the need for reading-oriented education, particularly the Cuban President emphasized that the physical book will not disappear, despite technological advances and added that in all subjects teachers should refer books to their students.

The meeting was attended by Ana María Mari Machado, Vice President of the National Assembly of People's Power and of the Council of State; and Yolanda Ferrer Gómez, President of the International Relations Commission of the highest organ of State power.

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