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"HASTA SIEMPRE FIDEL": What makes this book necessary are the people who inhabit it

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A journey from grief to hope is offered through the pages of the book *Hasta Siempre Fidel*, according to Cuban Minister of Culture, Abel Prieto. The volume bears testimony to the Cuban people's pain during the nine days of national mourning following the death of the historic leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro.

Edited by the Council of State Publications Office, the book was recently presented at the island's International Book Fair in Havana, along with an accompanying multimedia CD-ROM produced by the University of Computer Sciences (UCI).

More than 500 photographs by 41 photographers, reports from 17 national, provincial and digital media, as well as poems by 20 authors are included in the book, which is distinguished by the quality of its somber design and the use of the latest graphic arts techniques.

On the editing, design and multimedia work involved, *Granma* spoke with part of the team responsible for putting together such a beautiful and necessary volume, a process that began on November 28, 2016.

#### SELECTION OF TEXTS AND NOTES

Brief notes, to accompany the photos, appear throughout the 447 pages of the book. Dr. Rosa Miriam Elizalde was responsible for the selection:

"The texts have a discreet place, they only appear to provide context or highlight an emotion, which allow the reader, whether or not he or she participated in the funeral rites, to know what official reports were generated; what those lights were like along the road; how many people bid Fidel goodbye; where Raúl Torres' song was first heard; at what time the Caravan passed through each town; who participated in the honor guards; what was heard in Santa Ifigenia when Raul's hands deposited the ashes of the leader of the Revolution in the niche carved into the river stone; or what Cuban and world leaders who paid tribute to Fidel expressed in Havana and Santiago de

Cuba.

"The central character of this book is the people of Cuba who say goodbye to the most beloved of their contemporaries. It is not a strictly chronological compilation, but an image and memory of an earth-shattering event for the country and revolutionaries of the world."

What criteria were assumed for the selection and curation of the texts?

The book begins on November 25, 2016, with the sad news of the death of the Comandante en Jefe, offered by Raúl to the Cuban people, and closes with the tribute ceremony in the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, on December 4. It records what happened in that period of popular mourning and attempts to specify what happened at each hour.

How long did the compilation work take?

The edition and composition were done in a relatively short time. By the end of December we had the first mock-up, which we put together like a puzzle. The texts were adjusted to the images, not the other way around, as often happens in a testimonial work.

What significance do you think this book has in terms of history?

A poet says that we human beings "are our memory." What is here is not that of just any event in our national life, but one marked by grief and greatness, on a date that will remain forever in the history books. The tribute by more than seven million people to Fidel brought from the bowels of the earth, as Carilda Oliver said, the love of Cubans for their leader and the enormous sadness that accompanied his death, but also the patriotism, imagination, tenderness, and generosity of our people.

Hasta siempre Fidel is very dear to the team for another reason: it reveals the talent of our journalists, without whom we would not have been able to put together this book. Almost one hundred reporters and photographers participate in a beautiful edition that will make us cry, but will make us love this country, its people and Fidel even more.

## DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Printed in a four-color process, the book has a highly polished finish. Ernesto Niebla was responsible for providing the reader an edition with such a clean design.

What was the process for the selection and composition of the images?

The process of selection and composition of the images was the result of teamwork, like everything in this book, whose primordial raw material are the tremendous snapshots captured by photographers and photojournalists of Cuban media throughout the country.

It was necessary to analyze and process a considerable volume of images and in many cases resort to their metadata to confirm their accuracy within the chronology. The basis for their selection, apart from obvious technical standards such as focus or framing, was their narrative capacity. The possibility of providing many parallel accounts related to the main experience that is the reaction to the news of the death of the Comandante en Jefe.

What design and printing techniques were used?

From the very commissioning of the task it was a premise that the book would be printed in Cuba with the best quality standards. It was a way to pay tribute to our Comandante en Jefe, who did so much for the development of the country's printing industry. In order to enhance their technological capabilities, we worked in close dialogue with the Durero Caribe S.A. (where it was printed) and Federico Engels (where it was bound) printers.

The entire volume is printed in four-color offset, while graphic specialties are also employed on the cover, jacket and spine with the use of varnishes and relief. Paper with a suitable grammage was selected to highlight the printing of the photographic work. Special care was taken with the quality of areas of black tones, abundant in the book.

How significant do you think the design and content of this book are?

What was appropriate to the situation was to achieve a sober, transparent, dignified page. This result was achieved by working as a single person; from the initial vision of compañero Alberto Alvaríño, the skill of Rosa Miriam and the dedication of Juan José Valdés. What makes this book necessary are the people who inhabit it, as it reflects their image in a unique moment of their history. Not a mournful image, but an authentic sadness that, faced with the unquestionable fact of the death of one of its most beloved children, loves, and in that gesture it is filled with hope. This is a book that we would never have wanted to make. We created it from pain, but also as a people. Thinking about history or its transcendence is too distant from Fidel's teachings. That it be useful is more than enough.

## THE MULTIMEDIA

Rislaidy Pérez Ramos, UCI deputy director of Institutional Communication, also revealed some details about the making of the accompanying multimedia CD-ROM.

"We took it on as a commitment of the entire university community and a way to pay posthumous tribute to our Comandante.

"A group of students and teachers participated in the development of the multimedia; there were just over ten people who collaborated in the different roles. Programmers, designers, scriptwriters, musical arrangers, editors, and video animators were involved, each contributing their experience.

"An in-depth study of the book was required, of all the images and of the new materials that made up the final product."

How long did it take to put together? Did you use any specific software?

It took about a month, very intense, we even worked at night. The commitment was very big. A month that included all stages: the conception of the idea; the realization of the design; the development itself and then the extensive revision of the final details.

For the development of the multimedia, Electron technology was used, which allows the creation of desktop multiplatform applications from the JavaScript, HTML and CSS programming languages.

What new elements does the multimedia provide that the reader can not find in the book?

The multimedia is enriched with elements typical of this type of resource, which the book does not have, and which have their own language. For example, the music, a background soundtrack can be appreciated throughout the navigation of the multimedia that helps to reinforce the sentiments that the book transmits to us, and which are moving. The videos provide new content as well. All the written press materials help to gather the history experienced in those days. In general, one can interact with all the contents, move forward and backward, in a certain way travel back in time and transport oneself to those painful days, not only in images, but in texts, audios and videos.

The multimedia is divided into two menus, what can the public find in both?

The main menu, in the form of a timeline, allows you to access or browse the essence of the pages of the book, that is its photographs. The complementary menu offers information that allows us to delve into the essence and sentiment of the book.

Although you have experience with these types of materials, how necessary do you think this product is?

The book and the multimedia constitute materials that have the value of conserving the historical memory of a transcendental moment for our country. Being able to appreciate in their images the expressions full of sentiment and grief, and at the same time being able to see the messages of unity, revolutionary commitment, and hope in the future, confirm the significance of the leader for his people and the confidence in the historic continuity of the Cuban Revolution. New generations will also be able to appreciate this.

