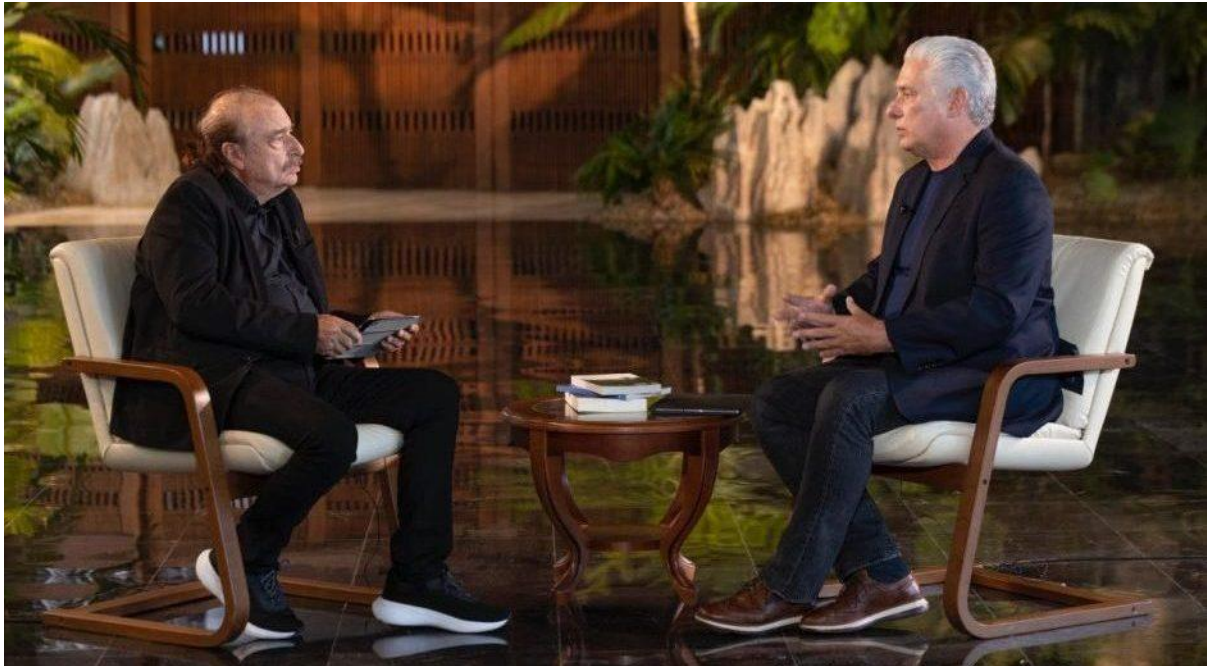


## Díaz-Canel in conversation with Ignacio Ramonet: "The SME sector will grow"



*Ignacio Ramonet (left) and Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel (Source: YouTube)*

Ignacio Ramonet did it again. The Spanish journalist and media scholar ("Le Monde"), whose book "100 Hours with Fidel" made him the (un-)official biographer of Fidel Castro, spoke to Cuba's current President Miguel Díaz-Canel. The two-hour interview was published on Wednesday. The topics covered ranged from the current crisis, to increasing protests in Cuba and the reactions to them, to US sanctions and economic issues, through to major world politics. In the following, "Cubaheute" documents some key points from the subject area of the economy and upcoming reforms (emphasis added by the author):

### **Energy situation:**

With regard to the current electricity shortage, which is characterized by renewed high triple-digit generation deficits, Díaz-Canel remarked:

**'At the moment, it is not so much the lack of fuel that is affecting us, but technological problems.** On the other hand, we have developed a maintenance strategy that we have been able to organize despite the circumstances, especially to have the least possible impact on the population during the summer. **These days, however, there has been the overlap of several installations having scheduled maintenance and other installations being down at the same time.**

Ramonet asks about possible solutions to the current energy crisis:

So, you asked me about the solutions.

**We are focusing on renewable energy sources, wind and biogas [...], but above all on photovoltaics, as these investments can be implemented more quickly. We have signed several guaranteed contracts that will provide us with over**

**2,000 megawatts in less than two years. This could enable us to achieve more than 20 percent renewable energy by 2030, perhaps even 25 percent.**

This will make it possible to leave the decentralized generator groups switched off during peak load and cover everything with this new energy.

Ah, because I haven't explained one point to you yet: When thermal power plants go down, the generators, which are mainly intended for peak times, also have to work outside these times. As a result, they are used more than intended and cannot always compensate for this outage. [...] A few weeks ago, the Minister of Energy and Mines presented our population with a comprehensive program. New solar parks are now gradually being built and put into operation in order to increase electricity generation in this way. **There will be a substantial change this year and consolidation next year.** [...] Some of these solar plants will be able to store energy for use in the evening hours, which will reduce fuel consumption.

### **Economic reforms and the private sector:**

**Ramonet:** Mr. President, among the economic changes in Cuba in recent years is the emergence of a market economy sector, correct? In particular, this has recently expanded through the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), known here as "mipymes" [micro, pequeñas y medianas empresas]. How do you assess this phenomenon, which is changing the economic fabric of Cuba?

**Díaz-Canel:** In my opinion, there are some clarifications to be made. Firstly, we have a planned economy that takes market signals into account, but it is not an economy based purely on the market, there is a concept of social justice in which market laws do not control economic development because we think very much about people first and foremost. The efficiency of the Cuban economy is sometimes criticized from a purely economic point of view, but I say: this blocked economy, which still does not satisfy all our needs, maintains important social achievements that are considered a right in Cuba today, but which have not yet been achieved in many places. So I think there is also a certain injustice in assessing the results of the Cuban economy. **On the one hand, it is a planned economy, but one that takes into account and recognizes the signals of the market and the laws of the market.** On the other hand, the SME sector. [...]

**Ramonet:** What does this private economic sector stand for today?

**Díaz-Canel:** When people talk about the dynamism of SMEs today, they say: "No, but they are growing very fast". They are growing, it's a relatively new process and we already have around 10,000, but one of our concepts, as part of socialist construction, is that the main means of production are in the hands of the state and represented by state-owned companies. Therefore, the greatest weight of the economy is in the state sector, without denying the important contribution of the non-state sector. I think it was also a relatively new field in the perfection of our socio-economic system. **Now we need to correct some distortions in the relationship between SOEs and non-state entities so that all contribute to the National Economic and Social Development Plan as part of the economic actors in our**

**society. For this reason, we are updating a whole series of norms, precisely in consultation with the non-state sector and the Cuban business sector, in order to achieve greater coherence and strengthen the country's economy through contributions from both the state and non-state sectors.**

We also emphasize here that many of these companies are created according to the concept of high technology and innovative companies, which we can achieve in the state sector. **This is because one of the characteristics of SMEs, whether state-owned or private, is that they adapt more quickly to change and have greater innovative capabilities due to their design and mode of operation.**

**Ramonet:** Do you think this sector will continue to grow?

**Díaz-Canel:** I believe that this sector will continue to grow and remain part of our economic system. It will not be an enemy of the revolution, but will make a contribution, as it was created under the conditions of the revolution. Although we know that the US government is trying to put this sector in opposition to the revolution.

Today there is an enormous contradiction: there are senators, congressmen and opinion leaders in the United States who say that instead of supporting the state sector, we should give money to SMEs to make them agents of change. Others say that SMEs, as creations of the Cuban state, are a certain front and therefore must be stopped. Even they have a contradiction here that does not arise in Cuba. In Cuba, they are a necessary part of the business fabric to advance socialist construction. They are integrated into the National Economic and Social Development Plan and care is taken to ensure that there are no distortions in this endeavor.

The full interview can be found as a [transcript \(Spanish\)](#) and now [fully translated into German](#) as well as on [YouTube](#). ([Cubaheute](#))