

VICES AND VIRTUES

Yesterday we referred to the financial lke that is driving the empire mad. It can't find a way of reconciling consumerism with unjust wars, military spending and the massive investments in the industry of weapons, which kill peoples, rather than feed them or otherwise satisfy their most basic needs.

Nothing could better describe the alienating contradiction than the words of Senator Richard Shelby, the senior Republican in the US Senate's Banking Committee, when he told BBC television: "We don't know how much this is going to cost. It's probably \$500 (billion) to a trillion dollars and that's going to visit the taxpayers sooner or later; it's either going to be a debt charged to all of us or to all our children", as reported by the British news agency Reuters.

No-one can have doubts about the destiny of the industrialized capitalist world or the fate it promises to billions of people on the planet.

The only way in which peoples today could live their lives in a community with social justice and decorum, which are the antithesis of capitalism and the principles that govern that hateful and unjust system, is through struggle.

In the tough battle to achieve those goals, the worst enemy would be the human being's instinctive egoism. If capitalism means perpetual free rein to that instinct, socialism would then be the ceaseless battle against that natural impulse. While at other times in history the alternative was to return to the past, that choice no longer exists. The battle is one to be waged basically by our glorious Party.

Every manifestation of privilege, corruption or robbery must be eradicated; for a true communist, there can be no possible excuse for such conduct. Any weakness of that sort is totally unacceptable. This was never the feature that characterized the thousands of men and women who volunteered to accomplish the internationalist missions which filled the Cuban Revolution with glory and prestige. Such principles of ethics and purity were the ones that inspired the thinking of José Martí and all those who preceded him.

It is now, in the aftermath of the recent and demolishing blow dealt by the hurricanes, when we must show what we are capable of.

Stealing from factories, warehouses, automotive service stations, hotels, restaurants and other establishments where money or goods are kept must be relentlessly combated by Party militants. And if any of the latter is found to have committed such shameful acts, he or she must receive the sanctions imposed by the Party, in addition to the relevant legal sanctions, which should be done without adopting extreme positions and in a responsible and effective way. Capitalism is a victim of common crime, from which it defends itself by means of sophisticated technology, unemployment, marginalization, murder and even extreme violence, which are already useless against the traffic in drugs that takes a toll of hundreds and even thousands of lives every year in some Latin American countries.

Cadres have no easy task in a world where incitement to consumerism is ever more present through radio, television, electronic media and the press, while the techniques for seducing human beings emanate from laboratories and research centers. Consider what happens with the so called advertising, which costs consumers more than a trillion annually. Commercials repeat over and over to the point of exasperating almost everyone with their banality.

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But stealing is far from being the only evil that harms the Revolution. There are also the known and tolerated privileges and the bureaucratic maneuverings. The resources allocated to meet a temporary situation become permanent expenses and consumption.

Everything conspires against the country's material and hard currency reserves, a situation that can result in shortages of goods and an excess of circulating capital. The same thing happens when the well-heeled rush to buy up excessive quantities of the goods sold in the hard-currency retail outlets.

There are state agencies with a tendency to lavish privileges or give away much more in the competition they unleash for the available technical personnel and workforce. Sometimes they become cheapjacks, using genuinely capitalist methods in their quest for revenues, to manage resources so as to gain a reputation for efficiency and secure the willing support of their peers. These are bourgeois habits - not proletarian - and we all have a sacred duty to combat them in ourselves and in others.

There are certain countries which do not hesitate in resorting to the death penalty to punish these crimes. Honestly, I don't think that would be necessary in our case, just as we do not think it is necessary either to idiotically reward the inveterate in our prisons. Let them learn a trade, but we should not dream about turning them into scientists.

Throughout my life as a revolutionary, I have seen how these vices develop alongside virtues. Weaknesses also appear among some citizens who become accustomed to receiving, and dedicate little time to meditating, reading the newspapers and being informed about today's realities. In its quest for spies and traitors, the enemy understands human frailties only too well, but ignores what is on the other side of the coin: the enormous human capacity for self-sacrifice and heroism.

Parents would like to pass material goods on to their children, but they would rather leave them the legacy of a decent life of good repute that could always accompany them.

On this island, the enemy has come up against a people ready to resist its blockade and aggressions for decades. That is why it is stepping up its measures against Cuba. It tries to deprive the country from its skilled professionals and workforce; it selects those who are granted the thousands of visas agreed upon annually, while encouraging illegal departures; it maintains and tightens up the Cuban Adjustment Act, which grants special privileges to illegal immigration from just one country in the world: Cuba. If the same facility were extended to the rest of Latin America, in no time Latin Americans would account for half the US population.

Even more cynical is the fact that it recruits mercenaries, who claim impunity and to whom it provides training and resources as well as international promotion. It takes pleasure in trying the patience and equanimity of the Cuban government.

Our people will never be in ignorance of the truth.

Not only will we struggle ceaselessly against our mistakes, weaknesses and vices, but we will also win the battle of ideas we have committed ourselves to.

If there is one thing the empire's leaders can always be sure of, it is that neither natural hurricanes nor hurricanes of cynicism could ever bend the Revolution.

Before that happens, as Martí said, the North sea will join the South sea and a snake will hatch from an eagle's egg.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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