The 9th Congress of the Young Communist League of Cuba

I had the privilege of following directly the voices, images, ideas, arguments, faces, reactions and applauses of the delegates taking part in the final session of the 9th Congress of the Young Communist League of Cuba held at the Convention Center last Sunday, April 4. The TV cameras show details from much better angles and distances than can be perceived by the eyes of those attending any of these events.

It is no exaggeration to say that to me it was one of the most touching moments of my long and hazardous life. I could not be there but I felt inside like someone engaged in a journey along the ideas for which he has fought three fourth of his life. However, ideas and values would be worthless for a revolutionary who did not feel it is his duty to fight every minute of his life to overcome the ignorance we all come with into the world.

Even if few admit it, chance and circumstances play a decisive role in the results of any human work.

It is sad to think of so many revolutionaries, with many more merits, who could not live to see the victory of the cause for which they fought and died, be it the independence or a deep social Revolution in Cuba; eventually, both are inextricably bound together.

From the mid 1950s, the year I completed my university studies, I considered myself a radical as well as an advanced revolutionary, thanks to the ideas I received from Marti, Marx, and countless thinkers and heroes who wanted a world with more justice. Nearly a century had gone by since October 10, 1868, when our fellow countrymen had started the independence war in our country against what was left in the Americas of a colonial and enslaving empire.

The powerful neighbor to the North had decided the annexation of our country as if it were a ripe fruit fallen from a rotten tree. Europe had already seen the vigorous emergence of the socialist ideas and the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeois society, which had seized power by a historical law during the French Revolution that broke out on July 1789 inspired in the ideas of Jean Jacob Rousseau and the 18th century’s encyclopedists, which had also been at the roots of the Declaration of Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, representing the revolutionary ideas of that time. Ever more often in human history the events tend to combine and overlap.

In my view, a self-critical spirit, and the constant necessity to study, observe and meditate are characteristics that no revolutionary cadre can do without.

From an early stage, my ideas were already irreconcilable with the hateful exploitation of man by man, a brutal notion on which the Cuban society was based under the aegis of the mightiest imperialist country that has ever existed. The basic issue while the Cold War was in full swing was the search for a strategy adjusted to the concrete and peculiar conditions of our small nation submitted to the contemptible economic system imposed on a semi-illiterate people --albeit one with a heroic tradition—through military force, deceit and the monopoly over the media, which turned the political views of the overwhelming majority of the people into reflex actions. However, despite this sad reality they could not prevent the great agitation among the people caused by the abuse and exploitation of that system.

For some time after the Second World War for the distribution of the planet, which was the cause of the second carnage, –hardly 20 years after the first, but this time unleashed by the fascist extreme right, that took the lives of more than 50 million people, including 27 million Soviets-- the democratic

sentiment prevailed in the world and also friendliness toward the USSR, China and other allies in that war that ended with the unnecessary use of two nuclear bombs, which brought death to hundreds of thousand of people in two helpless cities of a power already defeated by the irrepressible advance of the allied forces, including the Red Army troops that in a few days had annihilated the powerful Japanese army of Manchuria.

The Cold War was initiated by the new American President almost immediately after the victory. The former president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who enjoyed international prestige and popularity for his anti-fascist stance, passed away after his third reelection and before the end of that war. He was then replaced by his Vicepresident Harry Truman, an uninspiring and mediocre man, who was responsible for that disastrous policy.

The United States, the only developed nation that was spared from destruction by its geographical position, stored up almost all of the gold in the planet and the surplus of the industrial and agricultural production, so it was able to use the well-known Bretton Woods accords to impose to the world economy onerous conditions whose grievous consequences are still felt.

Before the onset of the Cold War, there was in Cuba a quite progressive Constitution, as well as the hope and potential for democratic changes, but not of course for a social revolution. The removal of that Constitution by a reactionary coup during the Cold War paved the way for a socialist revolution in our Homeland, which was the main contribution of our generation.

The merits of the Cuban Revolution can be measured by the fact that such a small nation has for so long been capable of putting up a resistance against the hostile policy and criminal actions carried out against our people by the most powerful empire ever in the history of mankind, the same that was in the habit of handling the countries of the hemisphere in its own way thus it underestimated a small, dependent and poor nation located a few miles off its coasts. This resistance would never have been possible without the dignity and ethics that have always characterized the policies of Cuba, a country harassed with revolting lies and slanders. Alongside ethics, a culture and conscience were built that made possible the feat of more than five decades of resistance. This was not a particular merit of its leaders but basically of its people.

The great difference between the past –when the word socialism could barely be uttered—and the present could be observed the day of the last session of the 9th Congress of the Young Communist League of Cuba in the delegates' remarks and in the speech made by the President of the State Council and the Council of Ministers.

It is most convenient that what was said there is reproduced and known inside and outside the country through the media, not so much for our compatriots who have accumulated experience in this long struggle but because it is fitting that the peoples of the world know the truth and the extremely serious consequences of the direction in which the empire and its allies are taking humanity.

In his closing remarks --short, profound, and accurate-- Raul went straight to the point concerning some major issues. His speech cut deep into the entrails of the empire and its cynical allies, as he was critical and self-critical something that makes more vigorous and robust the morals and the strength of the Cuban Revolution, if we are consistent with the daily teachings of such a dialectic and deep process in the concrete conditions of Cuba.

The empire was so used to impose its will that it underestimated the resistance that a small Latin American country of the Caribbean was capable of, a country that is only 90 miles off its coasts and where it owned the fundamental wealth, monopolized trade and political relations, and forcibly imposed a military base against the will of the nation, under the umbrella of a legal agreement that they also turned into something of a constitutional nature. They despised the worth of ideas vis-à-vis their immense power.

Raul reminded them of how the mercenary forces were defeated in Giron [Bay of Pigs] less than 72 hours after their landing, before the eyes of the Yankee Naval fleet and of the firmness of our people that remained unperturbed during the October [Missile] Crisis of 1962 refusing to accept the US inspection of our territory –after the agreement that ignored our national sovereignty reached by the USSR and that country without consulting us-- despite the countless number of nuclear weapons aimed against the island.

He also referred to the consequences of the demise of the USSR, which meant a 35% fall of our GDP and an 85% drop in Cuba's foreign trade, compounded by a tightening of the criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade on our Homeland.

Nearly 20 years have passed since that sad and terrible event, however, Cuba remains on its feet and determined to hold its ground. That's why it is particularly important to overcome and leave behind everything that may jeopardize the healthy development of our economy. Raul also recalled that the imperialist system imposed on the planet is seriously threatening today the survival of the human species.

Presently, to overcome old and new challenges we are counting on the people that went from illiteracy to one of the highest levels of education in the world, that are the owners of the mass media and capable of building the necessary awareness. On the other hand, regardless of the need to promote knowledge, it would be absurd to ignore that in an increasingly complex and changing world the fundamental duty of any citizen is to work and to create the material goods the society requires. The Revolution proclaimed the universal expansion of knowledge in the understanding that the better trained people are the more useful they will be throughout their lives, but the Revolution has never ceased to extol the sacred duty of doing the work required by the society.

By the same token, physical work is a necessity for both education and human health, that's why following one of Marti's principles we advocated from a very early stage the notion of combining study and work. Our education made considerable progress when becoming a professor was proclaimed as a duty and tens of thousand of youths chose to teach or whatever was most necessary for our society. Forgetting any of these principles would come into conflict with the construction of socialism.

Cuba, like every other Third World nation, is the victim of a shameful drain of talents and young labor force; we can never cooperate with that plundering of our human resources.

The task to which each person devotes his or her life cannot only be the result of a personal wish but also of education. Retraining and sharpening everyone's skills is an unavoidable necessity of any human society.

The Party and State cadres will have to tackle increasingly complex problems. Those responsible for political education will need to learn more than ever about history and economics, due precisely to the complexity of their work. Suffice it to read the news coming in every day from all parts of the world to understand that ignorance and shallowness are absolutely incompatible with political responsibility.

The reactionaries and the mercenaries, who yearn for consumerism and refuse working and studying, will find it ever more difficult to fit in public life. There will always be in human society demagogues and opportunists who advocate easy solutions with the aim of becoming popular but those who betray ethics will have less and less possibilities of deceiving. The struggle has taught us the damage that opportunism and treason can cause.

The education of the cadres will be the most important task to be mastered by the revolutionary parties. There will never be easy solutions; strictness and exigency must prevail. Let's guard ourselves especially from those that throw down the drain the people's principles and dreams together with the dirty water.

For a few days I've wanted to speak of the Youth Congress but I chose to wait until it was publicized in order not to rob it of any space in the press.

Yesterday, April 7, was Vilma's birthday. I was touched as I heard her voice on television accompanied by a piano. My appreciation is greater every day for her work and for everything she did for the Revolution and for Cuban women. There are more reasons every day to fight and to win.

Fidel Castro Ruz
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