

## WITHOUT VIOLENCE OR DRUGS

Yesterday I analyzed the atrocious act of violence against US congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, in which 18 people were shot; six died and another 12 were wounded, some of them extremely seriously, among them the congresswoman who was shot in the head, leaving the team of doctors no alternative but to try to save her life and avoid consequences from the criminal act as much as possible.

The nine-year-old girl that died had been born on the same day that the Twin Towers were destroyed and had been an excellent student. Her mother stated that all that hatred had to be stopped.

A painful reality came to my mind that would surely concern many honest Americans who have not been poisoned by lies and hatred. How many of them know that Latin American is the region of the world with the greatest inequality in terms of the distribution of wealth? How many have been informed about the infant and maternal death rates, life expectancies, medical care, child labour, education and poverty prevailing in the other countries of the hemisphere?

I shall limit myself to point out the rate of violence from the hateful act that occurred yesterday in Arizona.

I already pointed out that each year hundreds of thousands of Latin American and Caribbean emigrants, plagued by underdevelopment and poverty, move to the US and are arrested, many times they are even separated from their next of kin and sent back to their countries of origin.

Money and goods can freely cross borders, I repeat, but not human beings. By contrast, drugs and weapons cross, incessantly, in either direction. The US is the greatest consumer of drugs in the world and, at the same time, the greatest supplier of weapons, as symbolized by the rifle scope published on Sarah Palin's website or the M-16 shown on the election posters of the former Marine Jesse Kelly with the subliminal message to open fire with a loaded ammo chamber.

Is US public opinion aware of the levels of violence in Latin America, associated with inequality and poverty?

Why are the pertinent facts not being broadcast?

In an article by Spanish journalist and writer Xavier Caño Tamayo, published on the ALAI website, information is given that Americans ought to know about.

Even though the author is sceptical about the methods used up to today to overcome the power accumulated by the great drug dealers, his article brings data of unquestionable value to light that I shall try to summarize in a few lines.

"...27% of the violent deaths in the world happen in Latin American even though its population is just short of 9% of the entire planet. In the last 10 years, 1,200,000 people have died violently in the region.

"Violent favelas (shanty-towns) occupied by the military police; bloodbaths in Mexico; forced disappearances; murders and massacres in Colombia [...] The highest rate of murder in the world occurs in Latin America."

"How do we explain such a terrible reality?"

"The answer is given by a recent study made by the Latin American Social Sciences Foundation. The report shows how poverty, inequality and the lack of opportunities are the fundamental bases for violence, even though drug and small weapons dealing serve to accelerate the murderous criminal tendency."

"According to the Ibero-American Youth organization, half of the more than 100 million Latin American youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are unemployed and without possibilities of having a job. [...] according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the region has one of the highest rates of informal employment of youth, along with the fact that one out of every four Latin American youth neither has a job or is in school."

"According to ECLAC, in the last few years, poverty and extreme poverty in Latin America has affected and is affecting 35% of the population. Almost 190 million Latin Americans. And, according to OECD, some 40 million more citizens have succumbed to, or will succumb to, poverty in Latin America before the end of this year 2010."

"According to the UN, poverty exists when people cannot satisfy basic needs in order to live with dignity: sufficient food, drinking water, decent housing, basic health care, basic education...The World Bank classifies that poverty by adding that it is extreme poverty when people are living on less than \$1.25 per day."

"According to the 2010 World Wealth Report, published by Capgemini and Merrill Lynch, the fortunes of wealthy Latin Americans [...] grew by 15% in 2009. [...] in recent years the fortunes of rich Latin Americans grew more than in any other region of the world. There are 500,000 rich, according to the Capgemini and Merrill Lynch report. Half a million against 190 million. [...] if there are a few with a lot, there are many who lack everything."

"...there are other reasons to explain the violence in Latin America [...] poverty and inequality always play a part in death and pain [...] is it a coincidence that [...] 64% of the eight million dying of cancer in the world happens in the regions having the lowest incomes, to which, of course, only 5% of the money to fight cancer is dedicated?

"Looking straight into our eyes, truly, could you live on \$1.25 per day?", so ends Xavier Caño's analysis.

News about the massacre in Arizona fills the main US media today.

The specialists at the University of Arizona Medical Center are cautiously optimistic. They are praising the work of emergency crews who were able to operate on the congresswoman 38 minutes after the shooting. Such information can be found on the Internet between 6 and 7 o'clock this afternoon.

According to them, "the bullet penetrated the frontal area closest to the brain mass, on the left side of the head."

"She can respond to simple instructions, but we know that swelling of the brain could cause an unfavourable turn of events", they stated.

They explain the details of each step they took to control breathing and lessen the pressure on the brain. They add that recovery could take weeks or months. Neurosurgeons in general and the specialists related to this discipline shall be following the information released by that team with interest.

Cubans closely follow everything regarding health, they tend to be well-informed and they will also be happy with the success of those doctors.

On the other side of the border we know about the extremes to which violence has reached in the

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nearest Mexican states, where there are also excellent doctors. Nevertheless, there have been several occasions when the drug-dealing mafia, equipped with the most sophisticated weapons provided by the warmongering US industry, have forced their way into operating rooms to finish off.

Infant mortality in Cuba is less than 5 per every 1000 live births; and deaths due to acts of violence are less than 5 per 100,000 inhabitants.

Even though it hurts our modesty, it is a bitter duty to say that our blockaded, threatened and slandered country has shown that Latin American peoples can live without either violence or drugs. It can even live, and that's what has happened for more than half a century, without relations with the United States. That is something we haven't shown; they have.

**Fidel Castro Ruz**  
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