

BUSH, MILLIONAIRES, CONSUMPTION AND UNDER-CONSUMPTION

No one requires additional proof of the growing hatred that drives the slaughter in Iraq, a country where 95 percent of the population is Muslim —of these, over 60 percent are Shiites and the remainder Sunnis—or the killings in Afghanistan, where over 99 percent of the population is also Muslim —80 percent Sunni and the remainder Shiite. The two nations are also made up of nationalities and ethnic groups of diverse origins and locations.

In addition to U.S. soldiers, troops from nearly all European states are based in Afghanistan, including the French reinforcements sent by Sarkozy.

The Russians didn't jump onto the war's bandwagon; far too much of their blood was spilt there, and the invasion's political cost was incalculable. It is likely that citizens of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia and the Ukraine perished on Afghan soil fighting as Soviet soldiers. Today, as former Soviet republics, these states are part of or aspire to join NATO.

Another significant detail is the fact that the struggle against heroin traffic goes unmentioned in a country where war has turned poppy growers into the only people capable of satisfying the country's medical demand of opium and, in addition to this, of supplying countless people with the drug.

The Russian president notes that NATO has grown from 16 to 28 members. Bush declares he looked into the eyes of his Russian counterpart and read his thoughts —that's what he uses the teleprompter for— but he didn't say whether it was written in English or Russian.

Over 500 billion dollars were siphoned out of Russia through capitalist Western European countries, a significant part of which was invested in highly profitable companies or luxury homes. The rest was deposited in U.S. banks, with the government's consent. It was completely illegal and immoral. Before its collapse, the USSR was the victim of acts of sabotage, such as the detonation of a Siberian gas pipeline, using devices run with U.S. software, the empire's Trojan horse. The USSR then fell apart from within before Reagan, as has been demonstrated.

I cannot help but recall the Monday of April 3rd, when I laid down the voluminous international news bulletin and opened that day's Granma edition to distract myself a while. I began by perusing the last page. What a surprise! Juan Varela offered a nearly flawless description of the differences between the 24-hour roadside cafeteria and gas station center of Aguada de Pasajeros, in the province of Cienfuegos, and Nueva Paz, in the province of La Habana. In the first, the battle, which was and is still being fought, has for now been won. In the second, though the battle is being waged, victory has not yet been attained.

What does Juan Varela tell us? "The peddlers arrive from different places; they operate as some sort of association and employ a clever warning system. Using signals, they alert each other of the presence of law enforcement or state officials. Showing feline stealth, in a few minutes they can dismantle their stage of operations and transport the goods to a previously agreed to location. There, they await the signal announcing that the coast is clear".

Where do the goods sold by this fifth column in Nueva Paz come from? They are stolen from factories, means of transportation, warehouse or distribution facilities. Those who extol egoism and oppose all forms of restrictions by the State, which they consider meddlesome, will never be capable of building a solid and lasting society, a society which, today, thanks to the development of the productive forces,

can only be the fruit of education and conscience, of values which must be sown and cultivated.

Thinking is not forbidden. Neither is dreaming. But thinking does not harm to anyone, while dreaming can doom an entire country and even more than that: the human species itself. The development of productive forces by science has been accompanied by the parallel development of destructive forces. Can anyone dispute this?

Turning the Granma's page that same day, I came across the section titled "Chasing the News", written by columnist Elson Concepción Pérez. The article, which I quote, is priceless:

"Not one article in the mainstream press refers to the social differences, the unemployment, the inflation and the other evils that arrived with capitalism.

"On the Internet, however, you can see the other side of the coin: a group of 300 Romanians —the richest in the country—, have accumulated more than US \$33 billion, which, according to the 'Top 300' section of the weekly magazine Capital, is equivalent to 27 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product.

"While those living below the poverty line are in the millions, the Eastern European nation has one citizen with a fortune calculated at between US \$3.1 and \$3.3 billion. His name is Dinu Patriciu, and he recently sold a part of the Rompetrol oil company to Kazakhstan's Kazmunaigaz group for \$2.7 billion euros." Nearly 4 billion dollars.

"Dinu dethroned (...) Losif Constantin Dragan, who fell to seventh place with a fortune of between US \$1.5 and \$1.6 billion, according to the publication.

"Gigi Becali, owner of the Steaua Soccer Club, is now in second place with a fortune of at least US \$2.8 billion, accumulated primarily in the real estate industry.

"Former tennis player and businessman Ion Tiriac, the second richest Romanian in 2006, with interests in banking, insurance and automobiles, is now third with a fortune of over US \$2.2 billion."

Thus reports Elson, in detailed fashion, in this section of Granma.

Let us not forget that Romania was a socialist country with a fairly well developed oil and petrochemical industry, blessed with a fertile soil and a climate favorable to the production of protein and calorie-rich foods, to name but a few sectors.

As in Cuba, there were those with theories about easy access to consumer goods: imperial ears and eyes hungry for these dreams.

Another threat posed by developed capitalism is climate change. An AFP cable reports on the declarations of James Hansen, NASA's chief climate expert. Created by Eisenhower on July 29, 1958, NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, is an institution that has been decisive in the consolidation of the United States' current level of power.

"We've already reached the dangerous level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere," James Hansen, 67, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, told AFP here.

"But there are ways to solve the problem" of heat-trapping greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, which Hansen said has reached the "tipping point" of 385 parts per million.

"(...) The major obstacle to saving the planet from its inhabitants is not technology, insisted Hansen, named one of the world's 100 most influential people in 2006 by Time magazine."

"(...) What's become clear to me in the past several years is that both the executive branch and the legislative branch are strongly influenced by special fossil fuel interests," he said (...).

"(...) The industry is misleading the public and policy makers about the cause of climate change. And that is analogous to what the cigarette manufacturers did. They knew smoking caused cancer, but they hired scientists who said that was not the case."

"(...) Last year Hansen testified before the U.S. Congress that "interference with communication of science to the public has been greater during the current administration than at any time in my career."

"Government public relations officials, he said, filter the facts in science reports to reduce 'concern about the relation of climate change to human-made greenhouse gas emissions.'"

"(...) The policy makers, 'the people who need to know are ignorant of the actual status of the matter, and the gravity of the matter, and most important, the urgency of the matter,' he charged."

Another important fact I want to underscore is this: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a bulwark of the developed capitalist system imposed on humanity, possesses 3,217 tons of gold. The United States, which controls 17 percent of the votes —a privilege granted the superpower after the conclusion of World War II— can veto any decision, even if all other members of the Fund have approved it. The institution, burdened by an oversized bureaucracy, decided to sell off 403.3 tons of gold, to function "more efficiently". The real reason for this is that it has lost all its customers because of the unfair conditions it imposes on its loans. The 403.3 tons of gold, at the current price, are equivalent to 12 billion dollars. This is a paltry sum: the U.S. government forces the same amount into circulation, to save its banks, in a matter of hours.

The empire's colossal disinformation apparatus which, among other things, referred to my message to intellectuals claimed that Fidel was attacking the use of computers, portraying me as someone detached from reality. During his closing remarks at the UNEAC Congress, Minister of Culture and prestigious intellectual Abel Prieto brilliantly replied to the intrigue, invoking the more than 600 Computer Youth Clubs that have been opened across Cuba in the last 20 years, where over 200,000 Cubans complete computer sciences training programs every year. He also referred to the University of Information Sciences, visited by Congress participants, where over 1,600 well-trained engineers graduate in the specialty every year, and the investment made, during the Special Period, to undertake the nearly impossible project of reconstructing the Cubanacan Art Schools.

The persuasive, realistic and cogent words of Esteban Lazo, a black, white-haired man with a voice that resounds with his 64 years of experience, an exceptional witness to these processes having been the Party's First Secretary in Havana and other provinces before that, gave Abel's arguments even more strength.

If the empire managed to secure control of Cuba again, not one of these higher institutions created by the Revolution would remain to guarantee young people this right. It would send most young people to the countryside, to cut sugarcane. It is a declared policy. It would attempt to steal the artistic and scientific talents Cuba has nurtured, as it has done in other countries in our hemisphere. Having more than 70,000 specialists in general comprehensive medicine and hundreds of thousands of other professionals, helping others, the poorest included, and exporting these services, is a sin of which a Third World country cannot be forgiven.

Ultimately, we have held our ground in spite of the blockade, their aggressions and their brutal acts of terrorism for nearly half a century.

I had the privilege of listening to important speeches, delivered by invitees from Latin America and other countries, at the 7th Hemispheric Meeting for the Struggle against FTAs and the Integration of Peoples. I thank them for their words of solidarity and join in their causes, which they defend with so

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much talent and courage. Building awareness and mobilizing the people politically is indeed a lofty slogan!

Fidel Castro Ruz

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