

With pain and without glory

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“Absolute power corrupts absolutely”

The First Conference of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), was held on January 28th and 29th. It would be difficult to find in the national history an event that attracted less interest from the population. Only a few specialists paid any attention, and held very pessimistic predictions. However, the results published by participants in the several committees, and the final document titled Working Objectives PCC, go far beyond the worst predictions.

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With few exceptions, the participations and the documents are a repetition of speeches heard for 53 years in Cuba. What is amazing is the emptiness of the ideas expressed, full of outdated and obsolete concepts. This is even more so when considering the current difficulties of the Cuban economy, and when even President Raul Castro has acknowledged that the country is on the brink of the precipice.

According to the report submitted by the second secretary of the CPC Central Committee, José Ramón Machado Ventura, the Base Document of the Conference, published on October 2011, was debated by more than 65,000 groups and PCC nuclei and committees of the Union of Young Communists (UJC), who issued more than a million views, and which led to the modification of 78 of its 96 objectives and the addition of other 5.

Four committees participated in the Conference: No. 1: “The operation, working methods and style of the Party”. No. 2: “The political and ideological work”. 3:” Policy Framework”, and 4: “Relations between the party and the UJC and organization of the masses.”

As a result, 100 objectives were approved. Between the draft document issued in October and the final document, there are no clear differences in content, so the process of discussion publicized by the PCC and UJC, with its thousands of meetings and a million views, in essence, did not change ideas preconceived by the

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party leadership. This was aided by a profoundly undemocratic process, where the people were not consulted about the proposals of the self-proclaimed “vanguard”. Therefore, many members of both organizations will be very disappointed to find out that their ideas about changes and that the changes made by the PCC to transform into a true socialist and revolutionary party, had no listeners.

On the contrary, the old line of endorsing the party line as “superior leading force of society and the State ...” was maintained and it was proclaimed as the “legitimate product of the Revolution. At the same time, the organized vanguard guarantees its historical continuity. “This spiced with thoughts from Fidel Castro, made at the First Congress, about the exceptional condition of the organization. The embarrassing situation was ignored when Cuban society suffers due to the enormous economic and moral bankruptcy, caused by being managed for 53 years by leaders who have led the Party and the nation to a catastrophic situation. An organization that has led to this situation cannot be considered “cutting edge”, but on the contrary, it has been and is an actual load to the country’s development.

The supposed condition of Marxist-Leninist and Martian organization is still maintained, mixing the ideas of José Martí with concepts far removed from his, who was opposed to confrontation and class oppression. His thoughts were always inclined towards national unity and against exclusion, for a Cuba “with all and for the good of all.” These ideas are at odds with the tearing apart of Cuban society by totalitarianism, which has forced more than twenty per cent of the population to leave Cuba, and an even higher number of citizens, suffocated by the system, who also want to follow in this sad journey, leaving behind families and friends.

At the same time, such position is blind to the demands of the people, who refuse to follow obsolete and failed doctrines. Today, it is virtually impossible to see a Cuban with a Marxist-Leninist text in his hands, and it is even more difficult to find them in bookstores. Even the speeches of the leaders, fortunately less common since Raúl Castro came to power, are rejected, especially by young people, tired of so many lies and statements that are not the answer to their aspirations.

The PCC was created in 1965 to serve as an instrument of power for a group of people, especially its First Secretary. This party was a combination of the old practices of Latin American “caudillos”, seasoned with Stalinist methods. It cannot be said that this party had anything to do with socialism, a social doctrine that cannot be implemented without the highest degree of democracy. By contrast, Cuba introduced stricter control over the population. Power has never been in the hands of the Cuban working class, who has been exploited, and denied the right to form unions to defend their interests. Today, the real average monthly salary is less than 30.0% of what was earned in 1989, according to official estimates made by economists, which currently translates into less than \$20, according to the official exchange rate of 24 pesos for 1 convertible peso (CUC). Even the current Chief Secretary has recognized that the salary in Cuba is not enough to subsist. This is added to the alleged ownership of the means of production, in a country “of the bureaucrats, by bureaucrats for bureaucrats.”

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We cannot talk of a socialist distribution proportional to the effort of the citizens, when political opportunism has prevailed in the promotion of citizens, especially for those without the advantages of having relatives abroad, or simply based on corruption.

The final document of the Conference continues to blame external factors for the problems facing Cuban society, arguing that they are the result of “attempts to foment division, apathy, despair, ruthlessness and lack of confidence in the leadership of the revolution and the Party. “It also asserts that “it is intended to foster a society without a future, reversing the achievements reached in building socialism, independence and casting

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off all revolutionary gains.” It is difficult to find more falsehood and misrepresentation, since it has been the Cuban government who has brought all these evils to a people who placed their trust in a process based on impulses of megalomania and egotism of their leaders, becoming the complete opposite, an obstacle of popular aspirations

Currently, the party calls for a change of mentality, but maintains its iron dogmas and Raul Castro confirmed that he will not allow a multiparty system. At the closing of the the Conference he said: “Giving up the principle of a single party would simply legalize the parties of the imperialism on home soil and sacrifice the strategic weapon of Cuban unity” and therefore, he will continue to impose its monopoly, and whoever thinks differently and denounces the injustices that are committed, shall be charged as agent of the enemy. This is the speech of a leader from a failed party, speaking as First Secretary, who has been unable to fulfill the resolutions adopted by its Congress and even create his own generational relief. The only achievement has been the material and spiritual destruction of Cuba. God save us from such saviors!

The media coverage was another issue revisited during the Conference, but without going into a deep analysis. Objective 67 concluded: “Facing the manifestations of formalism, lack of creativity and outdated criteria that exist in the work of the media and propaganda that motivate and inhibit messages to effectively reach their target, particular attention must be paid to the diversity of audiences. “Similarly, Objective 70 reads: “Achieve the mass media report in a timely, objective, systematic and transparent manner, the Party policy for the development of the work of the revolution, including problems, difficulties, shortcomings and adversity, eliminate the information gaps and manifestations of secrecy, and take into account the needs and interests of the population.”

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As it has happened in the past, there is no recognition that the source of the gaps and distortions is the monopoly of power exercised by the PCC. This is the same thing that has always been present in countries with a dogmatic system and censorship, totalitarian governments that only seek to maintain power in order to satisfy their insatiable egos and personal privileges. In the speeches delivered at the Conference we could appreciate the actual unwillingness to proceed to an open information system. The possibility of providing the people access to the Internet was not even discussed. The purpose is to ignore what happens in the world and the access to any objective reporting on the Cuban reality. Even in the Commission No. 2 “The political and ideological work,” the proposal of Dr. Mariela Castro Espin suggested the replacement of “political work” for “political dialogue,” but it was strongly opposed by the leaders in attendance. It shows the fear of possible dialogue and confrontation of opinions, and the decision to continuing with the system of indoctrination and imposition of ideas.

At the same Committee some delegates, official journalists, attempted to blame the refusal by government agencies to provide information, ignoring the fact that this situation is the result of directives from the PCC. The official journalists could do a much better job, because even when these obstacles exist, they are very aware that anyone attempting to provide accurate and objective information, going beyond the strict limits imposed, would at least lose their job. Consequently, Cuban media continues to act as docile media spokesmen and propagandists for the regime.

Another recurrent theme in Objective 75 was the need for the promotion of women, blacks and young people to leadership positions. But again, there was no intention to analyze the actual causes. Thus, these issues were again sidestepped despite legal actions in place to equalize the rights of Cubans ignoring racial differences; they have remained strong and are now deeper. Blacks and mulattos continue to live in the worst

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conditions and are less likely to overcome these conditions with deep roots in historical reasons. Furthermore, by relying on the promises of the leaders at the beginning of the revolution promising equal chances, and fear of discrimination in the United States, exacerbated by the government, the number of black and mulatto immigrants has been low, when compared to the rest of the population, especially if they don't receive remittances from abroad, which are life saving resources for the population. The racial problem in Cuba will not have a true solution with demagoguery or designations aimed at blacks and mulattos "chosen" politically, but until reforms take place to release the productive forces and create opportunities for all Cubans, blacks, mulattoes and whites, who can improve their standard of living, and have equal conditions and opportunities for access to a decent life.

At the same time objective No. 76 states: "Limit political office and key state positions to a maximum of two consecutive terms of 5 years." A proposal not very original, that has been applied for years by Communist parties in China and Viet Nam, that will not be incorporated by the aging leadership of the Cuban revolution. Moreover, in the No.80 Objective it was agreed: "Establishing a selective rotation strategy for holders of political positions with administration and government positions, to supplement their preparation, and to allow administrative and government officials to experience political responsibilities, with similar purposes." This means that when the administrators finish their mandates of over 10 years, they are recycled as political leaders to continue their careers in "bossing." A manipulation which together with the monopoly of power held by the Communist Party, makes it impossible to separate its functions from those of the State, although a lot of old rhetoric and false promises are spent to change this situation.

In his speech, Raul Castro strongly stressed the fight against corruption and promised to give comprehensive information on the many corruption cases that have been discovered recently at the highest levels of government, where regular members of the party have been found to be involved. Indeed, these facts are not surprising, because the PCC has monopolized power in a society where it has been necessary to hold up the party card. It is no secret to anyone that a significant number amount of opportunists and profiteers did not join the party on ideological grounds, but to move up the social ladder and to receive material advantages such as good housing, cars, travel abroad, comfortable and almost free vacations at the best beaches, and stays in one of the 16,000 rooms with air conditioning and optimal meals of the magnificent homes mentioned by Vice President Marino Murillo. These deformations will not be changed while prevails the absurd pretense that the PCC is "the highest leading force of society and the State ...".

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The outcome of the Conference projected more darkness into the future of Cuba and some analysts have indicated their concern that they may mark a returning point in the limited and delayed reforms initiated by General Ra'ul Castro. This pessimism stems from the unwillingness in the conclave to implement the urgent changes required by the country. Everything seems to indicate that the most backwards forces in the party and the government refuse to change. At the same time that there is an unwillingness to understand what really happens in Cuba, and the dangers arising from the absence of social stability in an environment where the political, economic and other problems continue to increase at a rate much higher than the timid changes adopted.

In recent times not even the objectives pursued by the government have been met. Due to the limitations in the delivery of land to farmers and the distribution of agricultural products, the food situation continues to deteriorate. As reported at the meeting of the Popular Power National Assembly held in December 2011, food imports could reach 1.8 billion dollars in 2012, further restricting the possibility of purchasing other products

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abroad. At the same time, the domestic market offers agricultural products at a smaller scale, while in 2011 the average price of all agricultural and meat products increased 19.8%, according to recent data from the National Statistics Office (NSO). This despite the fact that there is a general consensus on the urgent need to expand the measures taken for delivery of land for farmers, who claim bans have prevented the expected benefits.

There is a similar situation with the reorganization of the workforce that runs very slowly, because the conditions were not ready to provide employment for displaced persons. This is due to the fact that the self-employed, faced with high taxes and a system designed only to allow to provide for survival, without the support of a wholesale market, can not flourish to the extent required. Therefore, restructuring of labor fails to advance and the workplaces cannot be reorganized. Consequently it is impossible to increase productivity and allow for higher real wages, and workers will continue without incentives to achieve acceptable levels of efficiency. All this contributes to maintain the dual currency static, with all its harmful consequences.

Also, the government has been unable to stop the loss of capital, both material and human since the early 1990. On the contrary, it worsened in 2009 and 2010, with rates of gross fixed capital formation up to 50.0% below levels in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to ECLAC.

The conference, in addition to undemocratic and exclusionary resolutions, showed the iron clad dictatorship exerted on the militants, who did not dare to abstain or vote against. The views presented on Cuban television with delegates raising their arms in sign of approval, seemed choreographed. The purpose from the stranglehold of the party leadership was to empower the Central Committee, so you can co-opt their election to 20.0% of the number of members approved by the Sixth Congress, in the period up to the Seventh Congress, or is, for at least 5 years.

Summarizing, it can be argued that the results of the First Conference of the PCC have been even worse than expected. It was a missed opportunity that could have been used towards the democratization of the Cuban society and the Party has become a real revolutionary socialist organization, abandoning their outdated concepts and methods in Stalinist totalitarian direction. That course would have been supported by the existing industry in the PCC favorable to the changes and transformations, with urgent needs for Cuba. To be successful, democratic ideas should prevail, in addition to the acceptance of pluralism and tolerance. Purposes that were not met in any way by this failed conference.

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