Carnival!

18/08/2014



People wanted party and there was party… but the Havana Carnival agonizes for lack of identity.

We must applaud the effort of organizers. This year the Havana Carnival went beyond its customary boundaries: there were activities in several neighborhoods of the city. The idea was to bring the entire city to live a festivity atmosphere… something pretty big task for such a huge city.

The program of concerts by popular bands was gladly applauded: great Cuban orchestras of dance music performed at squares and other spaces. People danced and had a good time until late in the evenings.

The gastronomic offer was considerably good… although, we need to say, there was a lack in a differentiated price policy: goods are still expensive, at least most of them. It must be said that the quality was not the best sometimes.

It’s common knowledge that transportation is the big issue of these parties, and once again the main bus lines had a considerable support.

There was also a sensation of safety, civic tranquility. The police deployment was remarkable. For some, perhaps excessive… but the truth is that a good atmosphere was guaranteed. The Havana Carnival is one of the safest parties in the entire continent.

All in all, people wanted party and they had party. But it needs to be said: the Carnival has not been what once was and they were at its best. But the party agonizes for lack of cultural identity, and for an economic design clearly insufficient.

Summarizing: the Carnival lacks "personality" and resources.

Let’s take a step at the time. There was a time when the Carnivals were a great popular party. The climax was

during the 60's, back then in the entire city celebration was in the air. A tradition was honored: large floats, fireworks, the election of queens and dames of the carnival, concerts, dancing, processions, and the carnival floats.

But that tradition is broken, partly because of economic restrains and partly because of prejudices against the character of the festivity: it was thought, for example that the election of a queen remembered little bourgeois habits.

There were changes in the dates, the routines, uncertainty in the artistic proposals.

In the harsh years of the Economic Crisis it hit rock bottom. There were years that carnivals were not even summoned. At some point, what once was a Carnival became a pale "popular party".

Fortunately, local authorities understood the need to rescue the celebration. And for some years efforts are carried out to revive them.

But the Havana Carnival has lost its character, its aesthetic calling. And the big floats, filled of lights, are now discreet trucks; and the parade of processions are no match for those of the past.

The show has lost its bright and strength. It's hard even epic to recover the former glories.

The assessment of the Havana Carnival falls low much more when compared with those of much smaller populations, where inhabitants and authorities struggled to keep their traditions alive.

In Remedios, Camajuaní, Caibarién, Chambas and other small towns and cities in the center of the island, every year celebrate carnivals of great summoning, showy and fireworks.

We don't need to go very far, in Bejucal, near Havana, the square works have international fame.

It's the great paradox: small cities have more overwhelming carnivals than those of the province capitals and Havana.

Havana would very much like to parade some of the floats from Remedios or Camajuaní, true monuments of fantasy and the hard work of those small towns. Perhaps have the show of fireworks like those of Chambas, just to bring forth an example.

The question is: why not? Havana is the country's showcase. Here are concentrated the largest artistic potential and supposedly the most effective economic mechanisms.

But we insist: the Havana Carnival lacks a keystone that must be strengthened by the help of all the political, cultural, and economic entities of the city.

The Carnival needs to be prepared the entire year, like those small towns "of the center". The company of the carnival, the local government should work to the detail the financing plan, to review artistic proposals.

The best designers must be summoned, either through contest or specific orders, so the result stands at the height of a city with more than two million inhabitants.

The carnival floats must be built with a clear aesthetic vocation, costumes must be renovated as well as the decorations of parades. The best choreographers, teachers, dancers, musicians, actors must be involved…

Budget will always raise problem, but Havana needs a better party. Large tourist chains and private business could contribute to the improvement of a party that in the end can be profitable for everyone.

It's not easy task, but it's neither impossible. Many things has been made in the last years, but is not enough yet. The city deserves a better carnival. Better thought and even better executed. The greatest responsibility obviously falls on the shoulders of the local government. But this task belongs to the entire Havana. The Carnival belongs to everyone.