EDITORIAL: against inertia and conformism in state-owned companies

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The sanitary contingency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has led the country to assume immediate priorities related to the fighting to the effects of the disease in the population. But the pandemic has also exacerbated the structural problems in the nation's economy, whose negative impact multiplies due to the challenging global situation and the tough blow triggered by the sanctions derived from the economic, financial, and commercial blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States. No one is sugaring the pill: the situation is really complicated. The shortage of staple products has forced to take emergency measures that, even though they have guaranteed certain level of social protection, have not met much of the needs of the demands of citizens. And everything is happening amid a monetary ordering, which is seen by some as premature, but urgent before the real perspective of the Cuban economy.

That is why the discussions on the capacity of the state-run business companies to meet the challenges of the economy at short, medium, and long term, cannot be postponed to "better times," once the sanitary crisis is over. It is not coincidence that the 8th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) devoted special attention to this matter.

It is no secret. There are pretty efficient state-owned companies, which set the standards in the managing process. And there are others that cannot get rid of its own malfunctioning, to the point that instead of solving the nation's problems, they actually create the problems. They are a burden on the economy. They are unsustainable bodies.

And the US blockade is not responsible for all of our inefficiencies. The lack of initiatives, the inertia, conformism, and the convenience of following "orders", as well as an evident lack of commitment with the responsibilities of social ownership has jeopardized a lot of Cuban companies.

"This is not mine. This belongs to no one. Therefore, I do not have to do my best:" that is actually a common attitude in workers and (which is even more disturbing) in leadership cadres. But socialist state-owned companies are indeed owned by the people. And the people can and must demand results.

In the Central Report to the 8th Congress of PCC, Army General Raúl Castro stated so without euphemism:

"The state enterprise system faces the challenge of demonstrating in practice, and consolidating, its position as the dominant form of management in the economy. This is not something that can be achieved by decree; it is an essential condition for the sustainability of socialist society. Thus it is imperative to provoke a shake-up of the enterprise system's structure, from top to bottom and vice versa (…) Old bad habits must be changed and entrepreneurial, proactive practices developed in the management of our companies and establishments, which will operate with increasingly greater autonomy, pursuing a higher level of production with greater efficiency."

And Raúl added:

"All this is easy to say, what is difficult, but not impossible, is concretizing and consolidating the change. The creation of a real turn-around in mentality is needed, to make progress on increasing domestic production, especially of food, to eliminate the harmful habit of importing and generate more diversified and competitive exports."

Obviously, changing goes beyond our wish (and necessity) to change. We must encourage it, promote it, and check it. And do it without betraying the essential values of the Revolution.

Raúl pointed out:

"It is worth reiterating that economic decisions can, in no case, generate violations of the Revolution's ideals of justice and equality, and much less weaken the unity of the people around their Party, which will always defend the principle that, in Cuba, the implementation of shock therapies that hurt the humblest strata of the population will never be allowed; no one will be left unprotected."

That is the greatest challenge.

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