

Visiting Cuba means helping the Cuban people

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04/05/2023



The loss of tourism revenues in the last couple of years —Covid-19 years— and the 200+ sanctions imposed by the US government are the direct cause of the severe economic situation the Cuban people is experiencing nowadays (1).

It is not necessary to adhere politically with the government of Cuba to understand that the rebound of tourism will help refloating the now-depressed —due to the lack of resources— public health and housing programs. And more directly, to help 73,000 families —those working in hotels, private or public restaurants, to cash in from the same income levels they had before Covid-19 (2).

That is why those who, from abroad, try to undermine tourism to Cuba to –allegedly- harm the Cuban Government, are actually attacking the Cuban people.

A few days ago, five people protested in Madrid, in front of the headquarters of the Spanish newspaper "El País", for a report that encouraged visiting Cuba (3), where obvious and common sense stuff

were stated, *"if no tourists arrive, the population will endure an even worse time"* (4).

And that is, precisely, the goal of boycotters: that Cuba does not recover its tourism revenue. This way, medicines, sutures and syringes continue to be lacking in hospitals; electricity blackouts and long lines at gas stations continue; and wages continue to be far below what it is needed while prices skyrocketing due to food shortages. The goal is to lead people to despair and hence, insurrection.

Thus, Florida Senator Marco Rubio designed each of the 243 measures added to the already existing blockade, approved by Donald Trump, and which, for the most part, are still in force. Sanctions that attacked remittances, trips and cruises from the US, medical agreements and investments, and pulverized hundreds of millions of dollars for the Cuban economy.

But calling for a boycott of tourism to Cuba, like openly supporting these sanctions, is cruel and indefensible. That is why they must make up messages that sugarcoat the crime. Thus, they assure us that the revenues from tourism goes to GAESA, *"a military company -we read- that controls 70 percent of the economy"* and *"finances State Security operations to suppress peaceful protests in Cuba."* (5). This *"sinister entity"* would have as allies abroad -they assure us- *"the Spanish companies Meliá and Iberoestar,"* against whom this boycott campaign is also directed.

But, what does GAESA mean? A holding of Cuban State companies whose benefits, as in any socialist planning economy, do not reach an elite shareholder, but rather the public budget, which supports education or the purchase of food for the basic subsidized goods. That is the crux of the matter: that a US dollar does not reach that public budget.

But what is striking is that, from this fanatical faction of "anti-Castroism", the newspaper "El País" is now being attacked for having a friendly "editorial policy" towards Havana. Gentle? "El País" is the largest media space for daily propaganda against the Cuban Revolution in Spanish territory (6), and where a heavy censorship is applied to every voice that expresses sympathy towards it (7). Last March, among

many other poisonous articles, that newspaper published an article entitled "*Cuba is not an amusement park,*" with the same message as the boycotters in Madrid: "*When tourists stay in hotels in Cuba,*" it read, "*they should know that all their expenses go to the coffers of the Revolutionary Armed Forces*" (8). Inventions like this have a space of total impunity, without the right to a response, in media such as "El País."

In any case, there is something called common sense. And anyone who does not have a heart consumed by hatred knows that, today, visiting Cuba means helping its economy and, therefore, helping this unjustly punished people improve their living conditions.

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