

Michael Moore, the imperial conqueror

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The Pentagon summons Michael Moore to meet with the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the presence of all branches: the Army, the Air Force, the Navy and marines.

"We haven't won a war since the big one", #II, they told him.

They are sorry for spending billions of dollars and that they couldn't even get the oil of Iraq they had promised. They feel humiliated, embarrassed and ask the documentary-maker for advice.

Moore thinks for a few seconds and replies: "Our troops need a well-deserved break. Send me, rather than the marines, because we've got problems that no army can solve.

It's then when Michael decides to invade Europe to steal the good things he needs from them and take them back to America. Thus begins "Where to Invade Next?", political documentary premiered last May and as he did in "Capitalism, a love story" or in "Sicko", the filmmaker shoots bursts against the American dream.

Although Europe has its own problems, acknowledges the also director of "Fahrenheit 9/11" and "Bowling for Columbine" (Oscar winning film), his mission is to collect flowers not bad weeds. Therefore, he limits himself to describe in almost two hours the good ideas of some European nations, which according to him, the government of the U.S. might apply if it wishes to in order to solve its serious internal conflicts.

Paid vacations in Italy

"I come to occupy Italy", announces Michael Moore. I am a one-man army and I will steal your best idea. In two years, it will seem that the idea was of the United States". The Italian couple with which he is talking to smiles like some who is colonized, at the same time that Michael Moore places the American flag in the middle of their living-room.

***Moore meets with an Italian couple.***

Italy is ahead of the US in terms of productivity and this critical documentary filmmaker cannot believe it. His people work more hours. However some owners of well-placed Italian companies as Ducarti assure that the results are fruit of workers' rights: 15 days paid for honeymoon, paid leave (eight weeks a year), lunch at home during working hours and five-week pregnancy leave.

Moore takes home all these ideas not before saying, "I am sure that you also make more love."

***Moore talks to a corporate executive on the workers' labor conditions.***

There are only two countries that do not cover maternity leave, states the filmmaker. "Papua New Guinea and the United States. There is also no law requiring anyone to pay for the vacation of his employees."

**Education in Finland**

Meanwhile, Finland deciphered the code of good education notwithstanding its students have the shortest session and school year in the Western world. "How is it possible that its children outdo the rest of the world if years ago the schools of this nation stank as much as those in US?", wonders the filmmaker.

In order to find the answer, he decided to enter Finland and discover the top-secret the "enemy" was hiding. He met Krista Kiuru, Minister of Education, but did not need to apply interrogation techniques or the famous waterboarding for her to confess. The expert revealed the maximum state secret in half a second conversation: There is no distinction in the quality of education between schools in different areas and Finnish children do not have homework.

Finnish educators state that the brain must relax from time to time to learn. So they consider the term homework obsolete and argue that children have many other things to do after class: Share with their family, play with others of their age, practice sports, read, listen to music and appreciate art. Finally, they should have time to be children.

From Finland Moore takes the right of rich and poor people to receive the same education and the elimination of extracurricular duties.

**Norwegian prison system**

On a visit to Bastøy prison, Norway, Moore discovers that the principle of rehabilitation, on which this country's prison system is based, is a great idea that Americans should take back urgently.

In Bastøy revenge as punishment is not applied. For this reason, four guards are enough to keep the order of 115 prisoners serving sentences in a kind of open collective farm, where they are allowed to run, play basketball, and practice cycling, fishing and swimming.

*At Bastoy, Moore is welcomed by an inmate strolling in the surroundings.*

*The filmmaker talks to one of the inmates who cooks in the prison.*

The cells (small, individual apartments) are fitted with basic things. They have no bars or locks, just a single door, which the prisoner himself opens and closes with his key.

As if that weren't enough, some cooks (inmates too) handle knives to prepare the day's menu. Knives of different sizes and sharpened, are strictly for cooking, assures on camera Trond, a convicted murder while laughing and caressing an axe to cut.

### **Decriminalized drugs in Portugal**

I have a lot of cocaine in my pocket, says Moore to two policemen in Portugal. Aren't you going to arrest me?

The officers smile. In Portugal this is not a crime more than 15 years ago, they told the filmmaker.

Dr. Nino Capaz, from Portugal's Health Ministry, known as the drug czar, reveals Michael Moore that people daily consume other drugs that are dangerous too (though legal) such as alcohol, internet, coffee, sugar, sex...and only a certain number of people become aggressive or violent. He adds that the same thing happens with other stronger drugs and their effects.

Although Moore is still astonished, figures show that drug decriminalization allowed to reduce its consumption in the last fifteen years.

Portugal fought against the big-money drug trafficking business (the real danger) and not against its victims. However, in U.S. if you are caught with drugs you're not considered a victim-user and they send you directly to jail, especially blacks who are forced to work for only 33 cents an hour, making US prisons one of the many companies that use 'slaves' at present, denounces Moore.

### **Tunisia: Right to Abortion and Family Planning**

Tunisia is a country from the Muslim North Africa where there were Clinics for women, financed by the State, something North Americans don't have.

In Tunisia says doctor Rim Ben Aissa, directress for a Family Planning Center, abortion is legal since 1973 and they have 24 health institutions, main focus on contraception.

*The "invader" met with Dr. Rim Ben Aissa, head of a Family Planning Center in Tunisia.*

According to the specialist those services contribute to equalize women to men. "They have every right to plan their life, receive a good education and get a job according to their capabilities."

What the U.S. should learn from Tunisia, asserts Moore at the end of this chapter, it's that when women win control of their own body they also win control over their lives, something North American women don't have either.

With refined humor the documentary director continues through the film "invading" countries to know firsthand those social conditions which are improvable in his country: quality lunches in France at public schools, gender equality in Iceland, free universities in Slovenia, to which many young North Americans who can't afford to pay in their country attend today.

### **The reaction of North Americans**

The North American audience immediately connected with the documentary. They come out from the cinema crying and wondering why don't we have those social services? We don't have them, said Michael to the website periódico.com, because we are "a greedy and racist country that dedicates his resources to wars."

The imperial conqueror, also added to nuevatribuna.com that with his last film "North Americans already know everything, they don't need to watch another documentary telling them how screwed up things are. What we need now is to move our ass.... Do something and be inspired in what we can get to be."

Though statements like these have not come cheap for Moore (threats and murder intents), the misfit film director assured not to throw the towel in. He will keep working to eliminate the fear and stupidity first that dominates his people and then the urgent changes that needs the richest and most powerful nation in the world, where paradoxically 46.7 million people live in poverty, according to figures published this month by the International Monetary Fund.

CubaSi Translation Staff

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