

Culture in Cuba will never be merchandise

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In times of overwhelming globalization, culture remains synonymous with identity and resistance of peoples.

Art and literature aren't mere commodities, although some assume it as such. Nobody doubts there's a market for art, but that does not mean art can be reduced to a purely commercial expression.

I say art and can tell culture, which is a broader and more embracing concept. No one living in society can be on the fringes of its culture.

After repeating it so much, it seems a set phrase now, but it is a truth as a temple: culture is the very essence of identity. There's no nation without culture.

That's why it's vital to defend that heritage in these times, which seem marked by the globalizing desire of the big market.

Right now, the world is hit by numerous wars, many of them particularly bloody. Most of are explained, at first glance, in the contradictions among dissimilar ways of assuming and understanding politics, though at the bottom, economic conditions almost always prevail.

But there's a much more widespread (and effective) war: that of symbols.

The big hegemonic power centers bombard citizens with productions from the so-called junk

culture, designed to stimulate boring consumerism.

Those who believe there's no solid thought column behind this strategy are too naive. Theoreticians of that globalization have a clear understanding of the power of culture.

The real logic is that of money, which in the end is the logic of most wars, even though nationalisms and the fight against terrorism and oppressive regimes are made explicit.

Without firing a shot, they dig a favourable channel through by-products of the cultural industry.

And it is not just about the naive and necessary aim to entertain, since paradigms are established in the end.

Hence the huge importance of the entertainment industry, which is supported by a gigantic advertising system.

It is not that easy, walls won't be worth building, since they will also be reductionist and in fact, impracticable.

The most effective barrier of peoples is promotion and defence of authentic cultural values that become guarantee of resistance and reaffirmation.

Art and literature can and should participate in the public debate without assuming dim propaganda and doctrinal stances, which are by force oblivious to creative exercise.

The entire artistic heritage cannot be confined to a purely ornamental purpose.

It's true that Cuba has now the same challenge to solidify a productive base.

Economy must be a priority, because it becomes support of the national project.

But not just economy: culture cannot be held hostage of commercial conceptions that, in the long run, will relegate it to mere entertainment.

Some Cubans, even with leadership responsibilities, understand it that way today. They believe, for example, that art is a secondary issue, mere complement.

Certain views consider that some cultural proposals should not be subsidized, because they might become a burden on the nation.

Some request that culture self-finances, thus ignoring that this framework is precisely one of the pillars of national sovereignty.

The enjoyment of art in all its expressions must remain a right.

Our liberation struggle always leaned on the traditions of a creative people.

Prohibitions, impositions, or schematic, utilitarian and chauvinistic views make no sense. Culture is guarantee of emancipation and freedom, as José Martí so wisely said.

This country enjoys a great privilege: its main hero is also one of its greatest poets and thinkers.

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