

CHE, THE ERRORS AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

Dr. C. Manuel de Jesús Verdecia-Tamayo, Profesor Asistente, University of Granma,
mverdeciat@udg.co.cu, Cuba.

Lic. Eleinis Rodríguez-Guisado, Profesora Instructora, University of Granma,
erodriguezg@udg.co.cu, Cuba.

Lic. Dangel Alexeis García-González, Profesor Instructor, University of Granma,
dgarcia Gonzalez@udg.co.cu, Cuba.

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century and the passing of the new millennium confirm, dramatically, the need to reflect on how to build the Socialist Revolution from concrete potentialities, limitations, dangers and constraints, which are diverse but also common. This issue calls for the unprejudiced, honest and objective examination of the mistakes made in failed experiments and in the existing "socialist" models. In this context, the social sciences acquire a special significance, since they can offer answers through the examination of reality, and their perspectives, that allow to warn, to avoid or to solve errors that could hinder or make impossible the construction of the new society.

The accumulated results indicate that to make socialism we cannot act and much think as we have done so far. The historical-social, theoretical-practical referents are not found in the collapsed experiments of Eastern Europe, nor in the former "real" Soviet socialism; nor on the roads that have survived. Moreover, the transformations that are now carried out in the current socialisms generate doubts, ruptures, resistances, incongruities, contradictions and questions still to be cleared.

Examining errors becomes a vital condition for building the Socialist Revolution. A process that is complicated by its multiple nature: political, economic, moral, aesthetic, educational; that is, cultural in its broadest and basic sense.

In the described scenario; placed in Cuba, and, due to the official call to work for building a prosperous and sustainable socialism, the return to Che is evident. Its validity - both for practice and for theory - make it a renewed and at the same time renovating subject. Guevarian thought is a source for the examination of the mistakes made in the construction of the Socialist Revolution, because he made deep warnings and criticisms regarding distortions and

misrepresentations, becoming also the protagonist of a sustained struggle against regressive failures that are overcome, emerge or reproduce until today.

The present essay briefly bases the value of the thought of Che, about the mistakes for the construction of the Cuban Socialist Revolution. I take up the challenge of making this work public, encouraged by the debate about the construction of socialism in my country. Perhaps these notes are interesting or contribute, in one way or another, to that debate.

Some reflections of departure

In the last decade, interest in the investigation of Che's thinking has increased both by Cuban authors and those residing abroad. Although we may consider the examination of this thought insufficient (Kohan, 2008; Martínez, 2010; Diez, 2012). The full relevance of a large number of its postulates finds consensus in the works consulted. However, the Guevarian pronouncements about the errors in the Socialist Construction form an intellectual area that awaits its systematization.

Starting from *A Sin of the Revolution*, the term error reaches a story of its own in the thinking of Ernesto Guevara, from a leading role to an implicit reference in the analysis of a problem overcome. The realization of revolutionary leaders' conceptions of certain vacillating or antagonistic elements, in search of greater unity in the exercise of power, makes Che; early on, critically pronounce on the errors in the construction of the Cuban Revolution.

Che's examination of error is linked to the result of the activity carried out not only by the leading Vanguard, but also linked it organically to other groups and social classes that assume new roles in the economy, politics, society and the ideology. It means, driving and social control. In his analysis Ernesto Guevara reflects the capacity to perceive the deep problems, failures and deficiencies at all levels, which accompany the functioning of institutions, agencies and subjects in the construction of the new society; including the lack of initiatives that move progressively from the Party to the rest of the social management apparatus.

But Che's scrutiny exercise on error pursues the search for coherent answers to concrete problems in Socialist Construction, process to which he dedicated all his mental and physical efforts during his passage through the Cuban nation. Error, again and again, is focused as an element consubstantial to this construction but at the same time, the rectification of these, is revealed as a vital necessity that guarantees the continuity of the Socialist project.

The examination of the errors in the Socialist Construction by Che travels from the most generalized failures to the punctual ones in the organisms that he directed. It clarifies not only the context in which they occur, but also the general dynamics of their development, emergence

and reproduction in the dissimilar processes: productive, cultural, educational, and political, among others. Its emphasis rests on the specific mechanisms by which cracks can be rectified, which involves the corrective and prospective action of plural and individual subjects in adverse material conditions, internally, and of maximum hostility by the greatest world power.

At the same time, the emergence of error in Socialist Construction prefigures the breakdown of the fabric of society of difficult legitimacy whose political, economic and ideological implications are extremely serious. However, many times, they are easily recognized. The possibility of the appearance of error is manifested as a singular process, where the relevant is not the error itself. The cornerstone is the capacity not to commit it again, to make it public, to disclose it, to analyze it in a systematic way to make it known and raise the perception of possible risk and thus avoid it, a matter that considers "... the constructive way of doing our homework" (Guevara, 1977 f: 84).

From the previous sentence it can be inferred that for Che, the prevention of error is placed as a substantial part of the work of management. All of which modifies the traditional styles of relation with those directed, and rethinks the educational dimension as social responsibility of the leadership. Society is organized according to the new circumstances and there is a need to socialize the exercise of power. It was necessary that the popular sectors raise their education, political training, that maximize their participatory potentialities.

Ernesto Guevara, when perishing, is aware that the probability of fighting against error in Socialist Construction arises when: a) this struggle is a concrete historical necessity; b) in this field, a part of society is aware of the possibility, not formal but real, of rectification. For this reason this struggle needs the theoretical elaboration with a practical sense. Its disclosure, that allows a conscious recognition of achievements and deficiencies, of advances and setbacks.

For Che, the correction of errors is a constant process, which allows the internal improvement of each entity. It is a turning point to restart the work activity where criticism, self-criticism and self-analysis should be used as methods. Although it does not exclude: demonstration, persuasion and discussion (Guevara, 1977 b: 131). This critical process contributes to the collective improvement in allowing the examination of the activity of all, with respect to the principles of authority and individual responsibility in decisions (Guevara: 1977 f: 88-89).

But Che also provides valid factors in the fight against errors, such as: study, constant overcoming, and daily discussion of problems, criticism and self-criticism, technical

improvement, foresight and the consciousness of the future and change that is implemented in all the orders of social life. The advance in Socialist Construction is revealed, in one way or another, through the dynamic error-rectification, that is to say "... our action can accelerate or retard the process and our duty is to accelerate the process to the maximum through the conjugal will of us all" (Guevara: 1977 f: 90).

Under these initial statements it is easy to see that the struggle against mistakes in Che's thinking can only be understood as a part of a wider process in the exercise of hegemony within, from, and for the construction of Socialism in context of underdevelopment; in conflict with the Yankee imperialism and the ballast of internal deficiencies in the political and social order initiated, which adopts a structuring opposite to the one previously existing.

Ernesto Guevara's everlasting treatment of error denotes his awareness of the significance of the phenomenon, which its consequences for the building of the new society could transform the very nature of the process of change and, along with it, the role noun of man in the liberating sense of society of himself; of the human species and the world around it by laying the foundations, consciously or unconsciously, for a late regression to Capitalism; a harmful and ignominious issue for the majority.

Meditating around the causes of errors

To discover the causes of the phenomena is not always a necessary knowledge, but for the Socialist Construction the discovery of the sources of errors derives an indispensable knowledge. From this depends, to a great extent, the progress of the process, the pace of the transformations. That is, the results of the work, and in addition the transcendence in time of the Socialist regime.

The identification of the error bearer has an accessory importance for Che, while the determination of the objective causes of them reaches substantivity. By the magnitude of them and the democratic nature of Socialist society, which requires the participation of all the factors involved in order to improve collective work (Guevara, 1977 g: 124). Understood in this way, the process of recognizing the conditions of error is not only a technical procedure, but it also takes a deeper view of the problem, implying a change in the analysis of the relations of production. In general, the influence of the Social relations over individuals; which implies an unavoidable integration of those involved in decision-making.

If the purpose of the search for the causes of the errors is summed up in the Guevarian phrase "to improve the collective work" it could be inferred that its motivation is reduced to the economic interest. But to simplify this question could be wrong. First of all, because in Che's thinking the

understanding of conditions forms a single entity, where the economic dimension of the issue does not appear separated nor does it acquire autonomy with respect to politics, ideology, morality and culture. This articulation is a resource for understanding and arguing the motives of Socialist society: the formation of the new man and the development of the technical base, where the economy must be governed by the popular revolutionary power (Martínez, 2013).

Che identifies two causes of errors: a) the circumstances in which revolutions occur, rarely or almost never matured and scientifically foreseen; b) how revolutions are made, as these are developed from the passions and improvisation of men in their struggle for social demands (Guevara, 1977 c: 281). That is to say, errors are not something alien to the revolutions, but are part of them, while the Socialist Revolution cannot be the exception.

Che's persistent concern with discovering the causes of errors warns the complexity of the correction of error. This issue is related to the process of transition towards a more decentralized, open, transparent society and with an increasingly progressive use of mechanisms and democratic spaces, where people's control and collective discussion of the social model to be implemented in harmony with individual responsibility and the social commitment of the actors of change (Guevara, 1977 b: 151).

In the following pages I will deal on a group of errors pointed out by Che. They serve as the basis for substantive assessments of this phenomenon. The reader can evaluate the validity of its formulations. Perhaps, many of these errors affect, in one way or another, in his *modus vivendi*.

Che and its fight against errors

It seems that the Socialist construction is subjected, from its origin, to the tension of error. This may not necessarily be a deficiency. From the urgency in solving problems and the vanguard is compelled by the dilemma between doing and inertia. The building of the new society is a very complex process, while the importance of the action gives an organic logic to the formulation, implementation, experiment and learning which implies the mistake, but also the rectification where experience acquires validity (Guevara, 1977 a: 64-65).

Che maintains that bureaucratism is not born with Socialist society, it comes from capitalism, nor it is its obligatory component. It sets itself up as an error in the new apparatus of established power. This failure has as a backdrop the inability to materialize things, the lack of interest of the

individual to render a service to the State and to overcome a situation given product to the deficit of revolutionary consciousness or to conform to what is wrong.

Che maintains that the manifestation of this error reflects a certain amount of despair in the face of repeated problems that cannot be solved, cracks in the methods to face a given situation, in the know-how to make fair decisions and in a short time; which strengthens the reunionism. This error, according to Che, denotes a lack of perspective to solve the problems and finds fertile ground in the insufficient organization and control of the institutional life of the country and the processes that are carried out, both in production and in politics, and, society as a whole (Guevara, 1977 d: 61-62).

Production with quality, both in services and material goods, was not seen as a social obligation; that is why Che makes several judgments about what he considers an error. It is not only is quality interested in its weight in competition in the world market, but it gives it a double condition: as an obligation to the people and an individual duty to the community, on which depends the utility of each product (Guevara, 1977 h: 144).

He warns that in the construction of Socialism, the economy must combine ends and means, goals and objectives. It also values the role of consciousness in production and services. He emphasizes, over and over, that the advance in this construction is adjusted to the greater control, coordination and government of the masses, the avant-garde; Revolutionaries, militants or not; the union, administrative and state leaders in economic life. That is, the economy does not distance itself from politics. For him, it is political economy. That is why he envisions a latent error: "(...) Pursuing the chimera of realizing Socialism with the help of the gimmicky weapons that capitalism will give us (commodity as an economic cell, profitability, individual material interest as a lever, etcetera) You can reach a dead end (...)" (Guevara, 1988: 9).

In the passage quoted, Ernesto Guevara reveals one of the essential questions of the understanding of Socialism, how to organize economic relations effectively. A matter which not only includes the correspondence between the productive forces and the relations of production, but it also transcends it by necessarily considering the rest of the social relations as a whole. Everything demands the gradual establishment of a new type of socio-economic and political relations on the basis of those previously existing. For this reason, it is the wrong thing to fight against capitalism using its own weapons, the motivations of "society where philosophy is the struggle of man against man, of groups against groups and anarchy of production" (Guevara, 2006 a, 2006 b).

Che approaches the planning errors that originated when the plans fail to get to know each other thoroughly, reach the bases, discuss them and approve themselves mechanically, without previously studying them. It warns that if the plan fails to reach the masses, false goals can be created and its compliance condemned to failure because not all those involved in its achievement have played a leading role in formulating its formulation, the result may be a perspective far removed from Reality and possibilities.

But Che also criticizes the errors of voluntarism, subjectivism, sectarianism and dogmatism in the analysis of problems and the implementation of revolutionary practices. In the creation of another reality, from the existing, with fullness and freedom for the man without which there is no Socialist Revolution. The critical spirit, the independence of the criteria and the ability to think and value with one's own head, and to learn to distinguish the paths, their implications and their results must be encouraged and conditioned.

The inconceivable heresy of building Socialism close to and surrounded by the greater empire of history and, moreover, from underdevelopment has a burden that prefigures the behaviour of people, by affecting both their conscience and their own culture because it is installed in daily life and often exceeds thinking. It is constituted in conditioned habits, to a great extent, from the outside. This obstacle makes the sacrifice become the bulwark of the Revolution. The overcoming of deprivations and limitations is based on the unfolding of one's own strengths and potentialities in the subject's constant capacity to be revolutionized within the process itself. This imposes the conscientization of all about the necessity of sacrifice, through conviction, demanding it vertically becomes a strategic error that can lead to unpredictable consequences (Guevara, 1977 b: 132).

When responsibility is diluted in the "whole" it causes distortions that undermine the development of the revolutionary consciousness in so far as social, individual or group commitment in the accomplishment of the tasks is restricted (Guevara, 1977 h: 132). In addition, this error enhances the lack of control, impunity, indiscipline and inaction before the bad done. Today, there is a tendency, in not a few cadres of different levels, to make intangible responsibility, specifically when facing the confrontation of corruption, crime, indiscipline and illegalities under the presumed assertion "this matter belongs to the whole society". Apparently, there is no awareness that such a deduction is a premise for insubordination and disobedience to expand.

He also identified the errors that occur in the productive sphere, which brings with it considerable failures in supplying the population. Within these misconceptions, he considered absenteeism to be subtle and tenebrous because of a decline in the revolutionary level of our masses, the political level of the workers' leaders and the directors of production incapable of bringing "... to the whole mass importance of production and the evils of absenteeism" (Guevara, 1977 e: 279).

Ernesto Guevara denounces how the leadership has neglected "... discipline at all levels ... especially in the economic field ..." (Guevara, 1977 i: 231). This misguided procedure may have, in one form or another, been taxed against the progressive deterioration of social discipline and the current complicated economic situation. Under the critical perspective of Che, Socialist construction reveals itself as a conscious process of conducting women and men struggling to eliminate all vestige of alienation.

He points out that the lack of knowledge and the intellectual daring necessary to face the task of developing a new man by methods, other than the conventional ones, makes it possible to mistake the attempt to build Socialism under the temptation to "(...) follow the beaten paths of interest Material, as a lever for accelerated development ..." (Guevara, 1988: 20). The disorientation of the leadership due to the inexistence of a real referent is great and the problems of material construction absorb much of their time and energy.

Che was able to diagnose errors of maximum danger such as dogmatism, freezing relations with the masses in the midst of the great task, and those deriving from human weaknesses, among which he outlined corruption (Guevara, 1988: 27-28). In its different manifestations it acquires in the construction of the new society a content different from that which it had in preceding societies, given by the pre-eminence of social property, which at the same time, imbues a moral character with the subject rather than the technical one. The hegemony of this type of property, makes the popular control rigorous and conscious, and to the transparency and the horizontality basic premises to counteract the corruptive practices.

SOME FINAL REFLECTIONS

The Guevariana phrase "Socialism is young and it has errors" (Guevara, 1988: 20) contains a whole complicated dialectic, consubstantial to the experience and the knowledge in the construction of an unpublished society; where creativity, improvement, memory and rectification influence the progress or setbacks of the pace of change. Che expresses rationality where the examination of error comprises a critical questioning from the totality; which evolves and enriches itself alongside its directive practice. In contact with the masses and in permanent

study of the reality that it has to live in connection with the revolutionary struggles of the world and the valuations extracted from the auscultation of the other socialist essays.

In this thought four interconnected issues are observed: a) the identification of errors; b) the search for the causes that originate it; c) the assessment of the rectification of errors; d) the proposal of methods, ways, procedures, it means, how this rectification should be done. These aspects are the object of permanent attention in their work, both theoretical and practical; from which he directs the corresponding actions. He proposes measures and draws up a whole set of procedures to confront their concrete manifestations, and thus avoid generating conflicting conflicts or delaying Socialist construction.

Back to Che becomes vital need; he offers answers that allow us to better understand the process of Socialist Revolution in Cuba, its contradictions, advances and setbacks, an essential issue to overcome the errors that slow the takeoff of our Socialism in the face of the uncertainties of the 21st century.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Diez Rodríguez, Á. (2012). The socialist transition from the perspective of Che. *Temas*, No. 70 (April-June), 136-141.

Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 a). Speech at the National Bank, 29 January 1960. In E. Guevara de la Serna, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take IV.

Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 b). Speech to the working class, June 14, 1960. In E. Guevara, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take IV.

Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 c). A sin of the Revolution published in *Verde Olivo* February 12 1961. In E. Guevara, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take II.

Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 d). Against bureaucracy published in *Cuba Socialist* April 1961. In E. Guevara, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take V.

Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 e). Closing speech of the First Assembly of Production of the Great Havana, September 24 1961. In E. Guevara, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take V.

Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 f). Words in the awards ceremony of the emulation of study circles of the Ministry of Industries, 31 January 1962. In E. Guevara, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take VI.

- Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 g). Speech at the National Sugar Plenary, April 13 1962. In E. Guevara, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take VI.
- Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 h). Closing speech of the National Council of the CTC ", April 15 1962 in Ernesto Che Guevara, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take VI.
- Guevara de la Serna, E. (1977 i). Speech in homage to outstanding workers ", August 21 1962. In E. Guevara, Writings and speeches. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences, take VI.
- Guevara de la Serna, E. (2006 a). Critical notes to the Political Economy. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences.
- Guevara de la Serna, E. (2006 b). Challenges of the socialist transition in Cuba (1961-1965). Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences.
- Kohan, N. (2008). From Engineers to Che. Essays on Argentine and Latin American Marxism. Havana: Juan Marinello Cuban Cultural Research Institute.
- Martínez Heredia, F. (2010). The ideas and the battle of Che. Havana: Editorial of Social Sciences-Ruth Casa Editorial.
- Martínez Heredia, F. (2013). The thought of Che in Cuba today. Intervention in the space Dialogar, dialog, of the Hermanos Sainz Association, in the Cuba Pavilion, October 23. Available at <http://www.cubadebate.cu/opinion/2013/11/25/el-pensamiento-del-che-en-la-cuba-current/> (Accessed July 10, 2015).