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CUBA-PRESS CRITICISM (FEATURE)
NEWS MEDIA IN CUBA SHOWS MORE CRITICAL CANDOR'
BY LIONEL MARTIN

HAVANA, OCT 9, REUTER - THE CUBAN NEWS MEDIA OVER THE PAST MONTHS HAS GONE FURTHER THAN EVER BEFORE IN ADMITTING THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CAMPAIGN TO RECTIFY MANAGERIAL AND ECONOMIC SHORT-COMINGS IS BEING MET BY SKEPTICISM BY A SIZABLE GROUP OF CUBANS AND THAT SOME HIGH OFFICIALS HAVE SPECIAL PRIVILEGES.

MOREOVER, FOR THE FIRST TIME, AN ARTICLE APPEARS WHICH QUESTIONS THE VALIDITYOF A DECISION TAKEN BY A GOVERNMENT MINISTRY.

THESE THREE THEMES WERE RAISED, ALBEIT WITH CIRCUMSPECTION, IN RECENT ARTICLES IN THE COMMUNIST YOUTH NEWSPAPER, JUVENTUD REBELDE AND IN THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CUBAN ARMED FORCES, VERDE OLIVO.

THE NEW JOURNALISTIC CANDOR IS NOT FORTUITOUS. CUBAN PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO SAID IN AN INTERVIEW WITH A FRENCH NEWSPAPER IN MAY 1987 THAT +THE PRESS HAS TO BE MUCH MORE CRITICAL AND HAS TO DELVE DEEPLY INTO AN ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS. IN A SPEECH LATE LAST YEAR HE SAID +ERRORS, YES WE HAVE MADE THEM - BUT WE HAVE HAD THE COURAGE AND THE HONESTY TO RECOGNIZE THEM.+

THE PRESS HAS COMMONLYCARRIED EXPOSES OF INEFFICIENCY AND BUREACRACY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. BUT IN THE PAST YEAR, THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN ENERGETIC STEPS TO ENSURE THAT THE CRITICISM OF SHORTCONINGS BECOMES AN INSTITUIONALIIED AND OUTSTANDING FEATURE OF NATIONAL JOURNALISM.

ONE OF THESE STEPS HAS BEEN A PURGE OF JOURNALISTS WHO DO NOT HAVE THESKILL OR WILL TO UNDERTAKE INVESTIGATIVE REPORTINS ASSIGNMENTS AND TO WRITE ARTICLES THAT ARE CRITICAL AND AT THE SAME TIME, CONSTRUCTIVE.

ANOTHER STEP WAS A COMMUNIST PARTY DEMAND THAT THE EDITORS OF NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES BE MORE AUDACIOUS AND COMBANTANT. A THIRD STEP WAS A MANDATORY RULE THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND STATE MANAGERS COOPERATE WITH JOURNALISTS.

A CUBAN JOURNALISTS FOR AN OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER, WHO ASKED THAT HE REMAIN ANOMOMOUS, SAID THAT +THE GOVERNMENT WANTS US TO BE WHISTLE BLOWERS AND NOT JUST CHEER LEADERS.+

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+WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT TO CONDEMN NEGLIGENCE, BUREACRACY, WASTE, OFFICIAL INSENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF CITIZENS, CORRUPTION AND THE DOZENS OF OTHER SHORTCOMINGS THAT EVERY CUBAN LIVES WITH DAILY,+ HE SAID.

THE JOURNALIST SAID THAT THE LIMITS OF PUBLIC CRITICISM IN CUBA ARE STILL GUIDED BY CASTRO'S DICTIM OF A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AGO: +ANTHING WITHIN THE REVOLUTION, NOTHING OUTSIDE THE REVOLUTION.+

THERE IS NO OPPOSITION PRESS IN CUBA AND THE JOURNALIST ADMITTED THAT THIS MEANS THAT THE MASS MEDIA, WHICH IS RUN BY THE GOVERNMENT, WILL NOT PRINT ANY CRITCISM OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CUBA'S SOCIALIST SYSTEM, IT FOREIGNPOLICY OR ITS TOP LEADERSHIP.

A REVEALING ARTICLE, WHICH MIGHT AUGER A NEW TREND, WAS PUBLISHED IN SEPTEMBER IN THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAER OF THE YOUNG UNION: JUVENTUD REBELDE.

THE AUTHOR OF THE ARTICLE, SOLIDAD CRUZ, QUOTED SOMETHING THAT ONE HEARS QUITE OFTEN IN HAVANA: +THERE IS NOBODY WHO CAN OVERTHROW THE REVOLUTION BUT NEITHER IS THERE ANYBODY WHO CAN PUT THINGS STRAIGHT.+

THIS PITHY COMMENT OFTEN COMES FROM THE MOUTHS OF STRONG SUPPORTERS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION. IT RECOGNIZES THE STRENGTH OF THE REVOLUTION BUT IT REFLECT SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CORRECTING MAJOR ECONOMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER DEFICIENCIES.

CRUZ COMMENTED: +IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO HOLD A CONVERSATION IN WHICH STATEMENTS ON THE INCOMPETENCE OF SOME OFFICIALS, UNNECESSARY DELAYS IN GETTING THINGS DONE AND UNDESERVED PRIVILEGE FAILS TO APPEAR.+

+IT IS THE HOUR TO SPEAK WITH FRANKNESS AND WITHOUT FEAR, THERE, WHERE THEY SHOULD HEAR US AND WHERE THEY CAN COLLECTIVELY FIND SOLUTIONS,+ CRUZ WRITE.

THE JOURANLISTIC SOURCE SAID THAT A FEW YEARS AGO IT WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED HERESY FOR ANY NEWSPAPER, LET ALONE THAT OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST UNION, TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE MAN IN THE STREET WAS HARBOURING SUCH SKEPTICAL THOUGHTS.

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HE SAID THAT THE ARTICLE MIGHT MEAN THAT THERE IS NOW THE VIEW IN TOP GOVERNMENT AND PARTY CIRCULES THAT IT IS BETTER TO BRING THINGS WHICH IRK THE PEOLE OUT INTO THE OPEN RATHER THAN ALLOW THEM TO SMOULDER UNDER THE COVER OF OFFICIAL SILENCE.

ANOTHER REVEALING ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN VERDE OLIVO IN SEPTEMBER. IT WAS TITLED +THE DADDIES OF THE CHILDREN+ (LOS PAPAS DE LOS HIJOS), AN EXPRESSION USED NBY MANY ORDINARY CUBANS TO REFER TO THE SPOILED CHILDREN OF HIGH GOVERNMENT AND PARTY OFFICIALS.

THE ARTICLE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, SPEAKS PUBLICLY ABOUT THE FACT THAT THE CHILDREN OF SOME HIGH OFFICIALS +DO NOT LIVE AN AUSTERE, SIMPLE LIFE FREE FROM OSTENTATION.+

THE ARTICLE IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED AS A BREAKTHROUGH BY CUBANS BECAUSE IT MENTIONS THE PROBLEM OF PRIVILEGED CHILDREN OF TOP OFFICIALS FOR THE FIRST TIME.

THE JOURNALISTIC SOURCE NOTED THAT THE ARTICLE IS SUGGESTIVE BUT NOT VERY EXPLICIT.

+IT DOES NOT MENTION THAT SOME ORDINARY CUBANS BELIEVE, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, THAT FEW SONS OF HIGH OFFICIALS WERE SENT TO THE FRIONT LINES IN ANOGLA DURING THE FIGHTING THERE, THAT THESE ADOLESCENTS DRIVE AROUND LIKE PLAYBOYS IN THEIR FATHER'S GOVERNMENT-OWNED AUTOS, AND THAT THEY HAVE CLOTHES, SHOES AND THE LATEST ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT IN THEIR HOMES WHICH IS NOT AVAILABLE TO THE AVERAGE CUBAN.+

IN SEPTEMBER, IN ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF MORE OPEN JOURNALISM, UJUEVENTUD REBELDE PUBLISHED A PIONEERING CRITICISM OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.

THE ARTICLE, ENTITLED, +IT IS VERY EASY TO PROHIBIT+, SCORES SCHOOL OFFICIALS WHO SENT ADOLESCENT BOYS HOME AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT SCHOOL YEAR BECAUSE THEIR PANTS WERE CONSIDERED TOOO TIGHT AND THEIR HAIR TOO LONG.
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ZIT SEEMS TO ME EXCESSIVELY DRASTIC TO REJECT OR EXCLUSE YOUNG PERSONS BECAUSE ZHEY ALTERED THEIR PANTS TO MAKE THEM A BIT TIGHTER OR THEY LET THEIR HAIR GORW IN THIS OR THAT FORM...'+ THE ARTICLE SAID.

IN WHAT FOR CUBAN JOURNALISTS WAS AN AUDACIOUS STANCE, THE AUTHOR CALLED ON EDUCATORS TO STOP COERCING STUDENTS AND TO USE THEIR +PERSUASIVE RESOURCES THAT COME FROM PEDAGOGICAL EXPEREINCE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILL SO AS TO INFLUENCE THE WAY THEIR PUPILS ACT.+

ACCORDING TO A CUBAN OFFICIAL, THE PARTY IS STILL DISSATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF PRESS CRITICISM. +TO CRITICIZE IS SIMPLE BUT TO BE KNOWLEDGEABLE AND CONSTRUCTIVE IS NOT SO SIMPLE.+

A GENERAL GUIDELINE FOR CRITICISM WAS RAISED AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING OF THE POLITBURO OF CUBA'S COMMUNIST PARTY.
THE MEETING CONCLUDED THAT +UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, THE JOURNALISTS AND EDITORS HAVE A VERY HIGH RESPONSIBILITY TO APRROACH THE NATIONAL REALITITY FROM REVOLJTIONARY POSITIONS...+
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