

OPINION: The horizon of utopia

By: Enrique Ubieta Gómez / Special for CubaSi
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The pandemic announced the end of the world. Astrologers and the most orthodox believers quickly launched their predictions. This time, the margin of error seemed small. Yet, they delved into the sacred books and prophecies, always misinterpreted, of their illustrious ancestors. But a less apocalyptic, and more desirable prediction was put forth by left-wing media theorists: it is the end of capitalism. To the vague perception of the decline of the West (not specifically referring to the loss of moral values, or the loss of God in bloody and fratricidal world wars, as was pointed out in the first decades of the 20th century), was added the certainty of its ecological, economic, political and social collapse. But

the cause was not the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The helplessness in which the health and social support institutions found themselves when the new strain broke out was a direct result of neoliberal policies. That is, of capitalism in its current state.

I was side-by-side with the Cuban medical brigade that traveled to northern Italy, when the world epicenter of the pandemic was in that area. Turin, the city of cars, where the Fiat brand (Italian Car Factory of Turin) emerged, today devoured in a large international monopoly, of or by many other European and North American brands, remained deserted, as in a children's story, in which its inhabitants, its businesses, and its factories had been frozen by a spell. All my interlocutors agreed in blaming neoliberalism for the progressive, slow but effective dismantling of one of the most advanced health systems in Europe. This time, capitalism was seen exactly as it was, and although people perceived it—the pandemic, moreover, exacerbated selfishness, increased the wealth of a few and expanded the poverty of many—and commented on it in a low voice. The evidence was not assumed in facts, just yet. There were “children” who shouted “the King is naked,” but the adults (the lords of the media and power) diverted attention to other “minutiae,” such as always having more hospital therapy beds available. Revolutionary solidarity was revealed in citizen help, but it extended to what people share, to what fights social injustices.

The news vendors spread three spectacular variants:

“there is no epidemic, it is just a new strategy of domination,” “capitalism has come to an end, let's reinvent communism,” “an Orwellian society, based on digital control, is stalking us.” The first was a distraction—a distraction has also been the call to reject masks and vaccines—but the other two, the main thing was missing, which Atilio Boron accurately pointed out: it is the people, not the viruses who change history. It is not enough that the objective conditions are favorable, if the subjective ones do not exist. It is not enough for reality to demand radical changes, if those who have to propose and impose them sit back and wait patiently for the miracle. When I asked a member of the executive board of the Federation of Metallurgical Unions of Bergamo if the situation created by the pandemic would lead to changes in favor of workers, he responded: *“I answer you as a citizen, moderately pessimistic, not as secretary of the FIOM of Bergamo. I fear that it will not be so. (...) I fear that nothing has been learned, and that we will return to the same conditions as before, even losing some rights.”* I bring up his response, because it clearly shows the attitude mostly assumed by the left. Land given up, land occupied. The right did apply radical changes, not related to health or organization, but political, in the opposite direction to what was expected. Never before has capitalism felt so exposed, so vulnerable. The reaction was extreme: faced with shock, capitalists opted for fascism. The pandemic, paradoxically, would reinforce the control of those who had provoked it. In fact, this whole situation lit the red light of a systemic

crisis, which seems to lead to the loss of unilateral leadership of the West. The multipolar world that emerges and already dictates conditions, winks at the anti-system left, courts it, needs it. It is necessary to support it: our enemies, today, are imperialism and fascism. But we have to go all in. No one set out to overthrow capitalism in the uncertain days of the post-pandemic, because no one, or very few, believed it possible. Without absolute, almost irrational, faith in victory, it is not possible to achieve it. Fidel defeated all his enemies, because he trusted the people and led them without hesitation. *“If I leave, I land. If I land, I enter. If I enter, I triumph,”* he had declared in Mexico before boarding the Granma yacht that would bring him back to Cuba. He left, landed, entered, and triumphed. Where there are no impossible things to conquer, there are no revolutionaries.

Western capitalism turns to war and divisionism as the last resources of salvation. *“Beware of the Russian Bear!”* howl the wolves who want to eat us. They also divide us, when they raise the specter of anti-Semitism, to facilitate the genocide of the Palestinian people; when they secretly stimulate ideological purism that transforms Marxist texts into a kind of Bible, the reading of which does not require establishing links with reality or when. On the contrary, they offer us short paths, limited horizons, because supposedly, we must situate them in the visible, in the possible. We cannot confuse goals with the horizon, the immediate with the transcendent. My

horizon is still communism. Fidel mobilized the people towards goals that for reformism, always latent, were disproportionate: becoming, in the next ten years, for example, the most cultured country in the world. If we do not try to reach the Moon, we will not reach the roof of our house. *“Utopia is on the horizon,”* wrote Eduardo Galeano. *“I take two steps, it moves two steps back and the horizon moves ten steps further. So, what is utopia for? For walking, that is the right answer.”*

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