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[Interview with Giorgina Alfonso González, Director of the Instituto de Filosofía de Cuba](#) (Institute of Philosophy of Cuba)

Cuba: “There are many accumulated needs and contradictions, of course, but hatred is not a need.”

Jessica Pernía, Interviewer

Segundo Paso para Nuestra América.- This interview with Giorgina Alfonso, Director of the Institute of Philosophy of Cuba, reviews the critical junctures and challenges of the Cuban Revolution in the 21st century. It is a critical reflection on the current socio-political situation, after the July 11 protests in several territories of the island. What is happening in Cuba after the domestic political and economic reforms, in the midst of the digitalization era, and in the midst of the pandemic crisis? How have the Cuban people been impacted by the shameful imperialist cornering with more than sixty years of embargo, twenty-nine years of the application of the Torricelli Act, and one year of the application of the Helms Burton Act?

SPNA: The Torricelli Act (1992) and the Helms-Burton Act, enacted in 1996 by former U.S. President Bill Clinton, and implemented since 2019 by former President Donald Trump, have left a series of devastations in the Cuban nation. Add to this the inhuman consequences of the unilateral blockade that has been in place for more than 60 years. Beyond the mediatized information, what are the real consequences of the blockade inside Cuba?

GA: This war has been enacted by more than 10 U.S. administrations, which have left a record of it in acts, regulations, ordinances. All of this, in violation of international law norms and the morality of international civic coexistence, as it is manifested in the permanent rejection of the blockade by the United Nations, which nevertheless has not led to its lifting.

The disintegration of the socialist camp also had a strong impact on Cuban society. And in some way, this increased the expectations of the United States government, so that from the 1990s onwards the blockade was tightened even more. With the Helms Burton Act, the Torricelli Act, and since the 1990s, measures have not ceased to be taken to make the blockade and the living situation of the Cuban people even more grave.

The consequences in daily life of these forms of warfare, such as the blockades, are sometimes made invisible; and as private life generally falls into an invisible field, many of the consequences of the blockade in people's lives remain hidden. I do not believe that the blockade's history and reality for the Cuban people is really understood and known. We, Cubans, have had to grow and survive, think, create and develop under absolutely unjust and unjustifiable conditions.

This genocidal monstrosity is not always visible to the international civil society. There is a global manipulation by the media that tries to present the blockade as a dispute between the Cuban and US governments, hiding the true essence and the sense of war that this blockade has.

SPNA: One year after the implementation of the Helms Burton Act, during 2020, President Díaz Canel himself warned the Cuban population about approaching a more difficult period, with economic limitations in different areas and limitations in the access and maintenance of services, among others. Are the scenarios warned about and the protests of the last days in Cuba related?

GA: Of course, what is happening in Cuba in recent days is directly linked to the tightening of the blockade. Opportunistically, the U.S. government takes advantage of our domestic situation linked to the economic, political, and social crisis in order to promote stronger measures. With this, it deals a mortal blow to the reorganization of possible alternatives that would allow the recovery of a better standard of living for the population, of hegemonic control from an emancipatory perspective in the Cuban context, and, in some way, of [Cuba's] influence in the regional context.

Today, people's daily life is very complex. There are shortages of basic necessities, long lines to buy them, medicine shortages, lack of electricity in times of strong heat, insufficient salaries, high price increases, delays in the effectiveness of the economic measures proposed to reverse the crisis. In several cases, these measures have not reached places with the coherence and systematicity needed to have a direct and rapid impact on the quality of life of the population. There are inequality gaps that keep

increasing in this context. This is not always related to the impact of the blockade, but it has to do with distribution measures, forms of internal distribution that favor some territories to the detriment of others.

There is limited public transportation due to the lack of fuel, which is related to the fact that the United States does not allow the entry of ships with fuel to Cuba. This then directly affects the energy supply. And fuel not only for public transportation, but also for cooking at home, and for work in the industries. To this we have to add the impact of climate change--as there are torrential rains and hurricanes directly affecting crops and housing--which is also deepening the difficulties. All this in a pandemic context; there has been a resurgence [of cases] causing the collapse, in some territories, of the health care infrastructure.

SPNA: Different intellectuals, thinkers, and opinion makers denounce a political shift within the Cuban revolution. What is true about this? What is really happening within Cuban society and politics?

GA: For some time now, we have been observing tensions and contradictions that have had an impact and have to do with the socio-classist reconfiguration of Cuban society, where life patterns and, at the same time, ideological and cultural patterns are being modified. A depoliticization of the revolutionary social project is being established, which is assumed as a natural occurrence. At the same time, there is an expansion and a growing strengthening of conservative, uncritical positions on what is happening in society, which combine with patterns of consumerism and individualism that are imposed as part of the strategy of imperialist domination.

This leaves us with many [possible] readings and reflections. In Latin America, in recent years, experience has taught us that although measures are taken in favor of the most humble and popular sectors, on the one hand, there is no guarantee that they will support emancipatory processes; and, on the other hand, it also means that, in the case of Cuba, there is a significant fracture in the social project of the Revolution. We have to think about how we can recover that subjectivity, that collective sense of the project of the Revolution, which is to improve people's lives. So, we have questions to answer: How to involve people more; how to encourage popular participation in decision making; and how to make people feel part of the process.

To do this, we must address elements present in the transformation of society, [such as] changes in the socio-demographic structure, the aging of the population, internal migratory waves, significant social stratifications to which the Cuban people were not accustomed. People of different class positions coexist in the same space, with different statuses and living conditions in the same geographical environment. All this means that we must look at the Revolution and the process in a different way; that we must look for other ways of building and doing politics, economics, aesthetics, ethics, within an integrality of humanist, solidarity and internationalist values. These are the challenges that we still have.

But it should also be clear that the Cuban people are not used to confronting each other. We have lived through 60 years of blockade and threats, but we are not violent people, we like tranquility. It is a right. It is a demand, and it is one of the principles of the Revolution. There are many accumulated needs and contradictions, of course, but hatred is not a need. So, this also says much about all the manipulation and incitement

that is going on, and forces us to think about what we have to do to prevent this from happening again.

Not everyone who is Cuban is a revolutionary, it is true, the Revolution is not the aspiration of all people, but the social project has to be for all Cubans; a project of freedom, emancipation, dignity, sovereignty and independence, and we will not give up on that.

SPNA: Throughout Latin America, social/political protests or demonstrations have been promoted or generated, such as it is happening now in Cuba. The recent Bolivian and Venezuelan cases are some examples; but also the cases of Colombia, Haiti, Peru and Chile, among the most emblematic, which have experienced intense popular struggles. However, what are the differences or contrasts between them in the political context of the region?

GA: There has been an attempt to compare the events that have taken place in Cuba in recent times with experiences in other countries, and I would like to make it clear that there is an essential difference, because this is taking place within a revolutionary social project which continues to be that of the Cuban Revolution. Also, we have not lost the possibility of rebuilding and strengthening that popular fabric of solidarity which has been the foundation of the Cuban Revolution.

In Cuba, the community social space has potentialities in favor of the revolutionary process; although it is true that a gap is opening up, a corridor in favor of capitalism and the return of capitalism in Cuba. But the majority continues to have a consensus in favor of the Revolution. There is a possibility for mobilizing actors, recovering that

revolutionary popular social fabric from the creative and cooperative spheres, with horizons of struggle against capitalism. This is what differentiates us from the regional context where the predominant logic is the logic of capital, and not the logic of the sustainability of life.

The revolutionary social project in Cuba is based on the educational, civilizing, anti-patriarchal, anti-discriminatory, anti-predatory cultural battle of ecology; one that is also decolonizing that hegemonic thinking of profit maximization. This is precisely the fundamental lesson that this experience of what has happened in recent times leaves us: the need to work together in institutional or non-institutional [spheres], in all the productive spaces, in the community spaces, to recover that social fabric of solidarity that has been the foundation of the Cuban process. We must promote the defense of a national production that guarantees food sovereignty; we must stop the deregulation of the market; and try not to lose perspective in order to avoid a State with a mercantilist attitude.

We must continue to strengthen the complementarity among social and economic actors, where interests for the common good predominate. And that the sense of the economy is not mercantilism, but the satisfaction of the needs of the population, not in the long term, but in the short term, providing local productive initiatives with greater autonomy. It is not necessary to wait for central subordination in order to enhance local productive initiatives that can provide immediate solutions to the problems we face. Turning work into the most important social recognition.

SPNA: What are the lessons learned, or to be learned, in this context in Cuba, a beacon of the Latin American revolution?

GA: Thinking about development, a development that cannot come only as economic development. Development has to be a transformative cultural process. We have lost the vision of development as a transformative cultural process, in order to put an economistic vision of development. In all this, in the fight against corruption and embezzlement, control and popular participation are important to stop the inequality gaps.

Building a diversified, participatory, and socially responsible social economy; creating creative environments, collaborative work environments; making truthful, timely, and attractive social communication; and not letting the enemy steal our social networks. These are all lessons learned at this time that have to do with the way in which we will make social justice, equity, and opportunities for all people a reality.