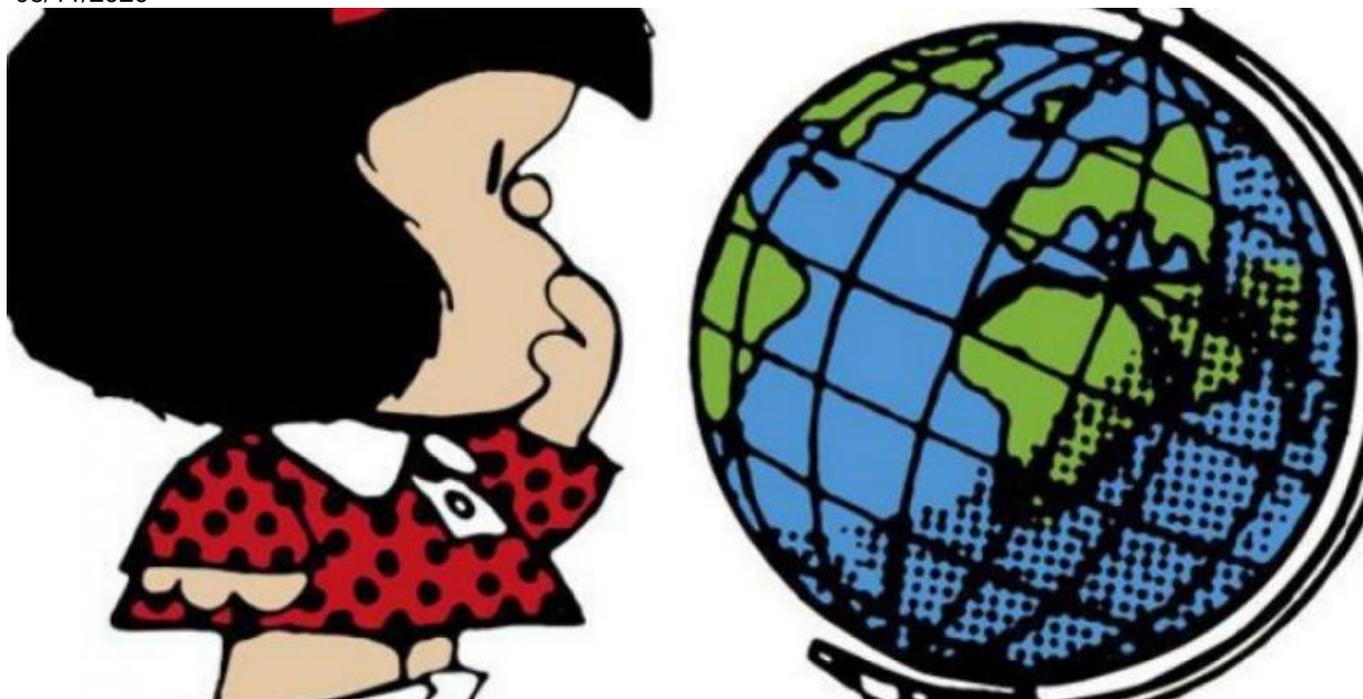

Don't let Anyone Step Off, Turn the Steer Wheel

By: Vladia Rubio / CubaSí

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"Stop the world from turning, I'm getting off " they assure this is an apocryphal phrase from Mafalda, the world-famous character of Quino. The Groucho Marx, the great North American humorist immortalized it.

The point right now is not who really came up with it, but the recurring desire to repeat it loudly, especially when you watch the news of the day.

For example, when you read that for the end of October, the renowned fashion firm Louis Vuitton is announcing that it will start the sale of luxury surgical masks at \$ 961 retail price.

They are part of the Cruise 2021 collection and consist of a translucent screen attached to the head with elastic strap stamped with the monogram of the fashion house. Screen and strap are linked by two gold studs engraved with the LV logo.

As if the famous logo were to scare away the virus of Covid-19 with all guarantee, as if paying that insane amount were to be more protected.

Sure, there will be those who can afford it, but they won't feel any more protected from themselves, of the little value they give themselves when faced without gadgets that can protect their face and soul from their sorrowful self.

Surely there will be buyers, as well as for the pierced woman's purse that the same brand has set up for sale for the "modest" figure of \$ 9,000.

And all that, while people are dying by the thousands from Covid-19, starvation, from several other shortages.

The most recent ECLAC annual report "Economic Study of Latin America and the Caribbean 2020", presented early this October, indicates that Latin America and the Caribbean are experiencing their worst economic crisis in a

century and that by the end of this year will be a 10-year setback with a harsh increase in inequality and poverty.

The joys will not plentiful this yearend because, according to the aforementioned report, in our region there will be 44 million unemployed -18 million more than in 2019-, poverty will decrease the levels observed in 2005, overshadowing some 231 million people, while extreme poverty will reach 96 million people, equaling the statistic figures of 1990.

If we contrast these data, which are much more than just cold numbers, with the luxury surgical masks of 961 dollars each or the woman's purse of that same fashion powerhouse, at 9 000 dollars, then, it makes you want to repeat the line "Stop the world from turning, I'm getting off".

But giving up cannot be the way. Better to join those who are crying out, and above all doing, not to stop the world from turning and getting off, but to rectify its course with a sharp turn of the steer wheel.

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