

OPINION: Socialist culture. Notes on a map of the homeland

By: Enrique Ubieta Gómez / Special for CubaSi  
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It will not be enough. We must break the chains of the blockade and overcome inefficiency. We need to resolve the energy crisis and inflation, export more, produce more, and innovate more. But it still will not be enough. The economy matters, yes, but so does socialist culture.

The society we are building is rooted in the culture of being. It can coexist with the culture of having, which dominates the global landscape that also includes us, but it must not lose sight of its own horizon. The collective strength of our endeavor will be proportional to the size of the dreams and hopes we nurture.

If our goals are reduced to recovering purchasing power or electrical generation, and if our solutions remain purely technical, we risk encouraging people to choose the “easier” path —putting “my” before everything else. “I will get” the money, the electricity, the well-being. If I have help from a relative or manage to start a small business, I will have money. If I obtain or buy a generator and install it at home, I will have light.

Prosperity, when spoken of in the abstract, often remains limited to each individual’s reach. It becomes entrenched within the moral framework of

capitalism.

If every person builds a private horizon — that is, their dreams, their efforts, and their accomplishments — disconnected from the national context, the result may be materially successful individuals. But then we must ask: what will make them fight together? What collective vision will move them to act and create for the common good?

If personal prosperity is the only motivation, and if creativity or participation are reduced to mere strategies for making money, then people might respect the rules only when those rules suit their interests. And if another society, even one we've long known as an adversary, offers better conditions for "growth," what ties them to this one? José Martí once warned us: *"American laws have given the North a high degree of prosperity, and also the highest degree of corruption. They have metalized it to make it prosperous. Cursed be such prosperity at such cost."*

If paper is scarce in Cuba, why not shape "creation" to fit the narrative preferred by well-funded publishing houses and rapidly built literary circles? The bourgeois form of nationalism, including not only the bourgeoisie but also those who aspire to join it, is ready to sell the nation because it has already sold its soul.

Socialist prosperity, by contrast, has a collective soul and heart, even as it remains personal. The country we were born in is more than landscape, childhood memories, or traditional foods. Love for one's homeland can move, but a nation must be more than *"the land beneath our feet."* If it is not a collective life project, the country becomes nothing more than oneself.

Revolutionaries must dream and strive for more. The story of the poor child from the neighborhood who climbs the social ladder through talent or cleverness and returns to flaunt his wealth like King Midas among his old neighbors is, alongside the tale of Cinderella, one of capitalism's ideological myths. It teaches those "at the bottom" that success means joining *"those at the top."*

That logic was present when Baby Lores explained in 2008 why he charged 100 CUC per person for a concert:

*"If I hadn't charged 100 CUC, there were people we were interested in who would not have come. Artists, athletes, painters... the VIP crowd that exists everywhere."*

That was his "debut" in elite society, a way to declare that he now belonged to "the top," although his idea of importance was defined by money and fame. Fame and money are quantitative measures, not qualitative ones.

We see extreme examples of that same story in figures like Colombia's Pablo Escobar and Cuba's Gilbertman. The latter you may not remember — his time was brief, a shooting star. He fled U.S. justice with large sums of money and returned to his old Havana neighborhood. He bought homes, luxury cars, bodyguards, women, and influence. A would-be reggaeton artist, he paid for his own music videos and played himself. He chose the wrong country. Cuban police shut down his real-life thriller.

It is true that his crimes were not on the same scale as Escobar's, but both followed the capitalist path, from victim to victimizer, with money as the source of power. Corrupt politicians also walk that path. They do not rob banks, but they do loot national coffers.

This is not an argument against a musical genre. All genres can coexist. Each performer should be judged individually. Experts say "reparto" is a Cuban variant of reggaeton. But let's shift the focus.

In literature, novelist Mario Vargas Llosa once said this of Corín Tellado, quoted on Alberto Curbelo's profile:

*"It's not wrong to say Corín Tellado, the Asturian writer, was perhaps the most remarkable sociocultural phenomenon in the Spanish language since the Golden Age. It sounds heretical from a qualitative perspective, but not from a quantitative one. Not Borges, García Márquez, Ortega y Gasset, or any other great writer influenced as many people's ways of feeling, speaking, loving, hating, and understanding life."*

It would be absurd to prohibit Corín Tellado. Phenomena like hers must be studied, understood, and guided—not ignored.

But when paper is limited, priorities change. Cuban writers, trained by the Revolution, mostly aspire to create lasting, meaningful works. They do not aim to write formulaic bestsellers or self-help books just for profit. Still, they want to be read, just as musicians want to be heard and included in today's music economy, dominated by social media.

Income from art should reflect its quality, which is not always measured by popularity. But the art market is rarely fair. That is why cultural business, if it aims to serve socialist culture, must be guided by socialist institutions.

There is an ongoing cultural war between two models of success. One promotes the capitalist culture of having, and the other defends the socialist culture of being.

Yes, ideology requires funding, and culture carries and reproduces ideology.

Debating *reggaeton* and *reparto* is valid. These are major currents in mass consumption. But the debate loses its way if it focuses solely on musical merit or if it revolves only around the mechanics of promotion.

What matters is not just the music, but the lyrics and visual symbols it conveys. These do not reflect the lives of the humble, as some claim. The mirror they hold up is a false one, placed there by capitalism. Their messages and aesthetics promote the capitalist lifestyle, just like their Puerto Rican or Panamanian counterparts.

This is the real issue. The Cuban state's cultural policy must provide alternatives and be creative. It is essential that Cuban dancers and *reparto* fans understand the message's deeper implications. Let them dance, yes, but let them think as well.

This is not unique to music. The cultural war affects every area of life. *Reggaeton-reparto* simply makes it more visible. And some artists embody that model fully.

We should not excuse it by citing the economic crisis or class disparities. The superstructure has its own logic, and we must act upon it.

Our collective horizon cannot be defined by immediate needs. What remains at the level of daily survival is usually solved individually. We must embrace the revolutionary discourse and the practice of human redemption. We must act for justice —within and beyond our borders— even if the best we can achieve is partial relief.

We must survive a tightened blockade that will only intensify in the years ahead. But to do so, even in the face of so many urgent needs, we must protect socialist culture.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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