

REVOLUTIONARY TIMES CALL FOR REVOLUTIONARY MEASURES

We are now well into the 21st century and our well-established, routine life has been stuck by the outbreak of CoVid-19, a strain of the Coronavirus family of which one, SARS, already appeared in 2002. The numbers for CoVid-19 have shown for it to be worse than the SARS on a global level, displaying a lower death ratio but a significantly higher spreading capacity, which has made it a pandemic in just three months. The fear of it derived, at first, from the memory of the SARS, and then grew exponentially the closer the CoVid would get. As of now, the virus is widely diffused in Northern Italy and every region of the peninsula is in a forced lockdown: everyone is forced to stay at home except for essential needs. What is more, the situation can do nothing but worsen globally in the next months. In such a situation, one has a lot of spare time to think, and as such something that could come to mind is a comparison between the beginnings of this century and of the last one. In 1920 the war had left a broken and unstable Europe. The people had been shown a reality very different from the 1900-1910s and the horrors were still very present in their lives, remembered by those who had lost someone to the conflict and embodied by those who had returned. The situation got better just to fall again with the economical crisis of 1929 and then with the war in 1939. I think it is useful to remark how, in these 20 years, only three European governments managed to remain a democracy and all the others turned into dictatorships, because it was felt as the most effective way of dealing with the problems at hand. As a side note, I also want to remark how quick the anti-epidemic efforts in China have been. Then again, submitting to a dictatorship just to better manage a particular situation does not seem very reasonable: “temporary” and “dictatorship” are two words that do not go hand in hand.

So how can we fight effectively an epidemic of this scale without recurring to a dictatorial state? Given that the results would probably not be as effective, the best way to do so would be for everyone to collectively join forces. Going back to the comparison between the 20th and the 21st century, from my point of view both have in common the breaking of an illusion: the war had shattered the dreams of a bright future to be had thanks to the sudden advances in technology; also, the illusion of the Roaring ‘20s was then destroyed by the economical crisis. In the same way, this epidemic has made us realize that our normal way of living is actually a privileged one, and it should have made us think about two very conflictual aspects of our world: the idea of an individual in contrast with a collectivity and, by extension, of a nation in contrast with the phenomena of globalization. We have come to live in a world where, because of various aspects, a single action taken by a single individual may come to harm everybody. This is especially true now, because of the nature of the crisis that we have to fight: a single, avoidable diffusion of the virus might reverberate even on other countries. As also the Pope has written in the Encyclical Letter “*Laudato Si*”, “Since everything is so closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis [...], social ecology is necessarily institutional. Within each social stratum, institutions develop to regulate human relationships. Anything which weakens those institutions has negative consequences, such as injustice, violence and loss of freedom.” This sentences of Pope Francis, reinterpreted to fit the CoVid-19 epidemic, call for a world capable of reacting as a whole, forming a united front against a common menace. In such a world as ours, where a trip around the world can take less than a day, a problem in New Zealand could potentially take less than a day to reach Europe. As such, the idea of every single nation acting on its own is a losing one, and one that will lead, without a doubt, to dragging this problem

on for far longer than it would be needed. To get on with our comparison, after WW1 most of the countries of Europe realized that they needed to avoid another devastating conflict such as that and they formed the Society of Nations. The SN should have been a functional diplomatic instrument, but it was flawed in quite an apparent way: it did not include Germany nor the US, effectively making it just a reunion of the winners of the war. Also because of this, it was useless in defusing the preludes to WW2. We should be wary against making the same mistakes: there are worldwide organizations whose aim is to still contemplate each unique nation's prerogatives while joining forces towards a common goal. They offer a rational means of discussing a plan of action and implementing it for the best. As in Golding's "Lord of the Flies", we should cooperate, each to the best of their possibility, and realize what is best for everyone. We should despise those who try to take advantage of a critical situation for their benefit and realize that instead of criticizing each other we need to act together. Regarding the current crisis, the WHO, World Health Organization, is most certainly the organization to turn to. It is a specialized agency of the United Nations whose function is to fight for health issues all around the world. It is also the primary institution working towards bettering the lifestyle in underdeveloped countries. The results it shows are evidence that acting as a collectivity is the most effective way of avoiding and fighting worldwide emergencies.

Despite this, countries are reacting to the CoVid-19 outbreak in the most diverse ways: disorganization and lack of effective communication have been, at least at the beginning, a diffused reality: the delay in China's divulging of the information about the developing of the virus at first and then the various and uncoordinated reactions of the other countries, which have been ineffective in avoiding the spreading of the virus through most of Europe. Also, the US have had no reaction until the first cases had been verified on their soil, and the response to the growing infections has been to completely shut down all the flights from continental Europe, leaving out the United Kingdom. This preposterously shows the profound issue that undermines every collective enterprise the world might embark on: economical consequences are something that simply cannot be overcome because of the way our society is structured. This has led to the current situation, which configures itself as quite critical. Another problem to address is the behavior of every single individual: as the Pope has written, everything undermining the institutions results in a bad consequence of some sort. And defying or utterly breaking the rules of said institutions means severely undermining them: the government of the Lombardy region has found out that outdoor movements have decreased by only 60% since the 20th of February. This is quite an uncertain statistic, but read as it is it would mean that almost as much as half of the normal traffic is present in a high-risk zone as Lombardy. It would mean that a lot of unnecessary outdoor movement is being made, without care for one's own and other people's health. Another ludicrous example of this is the great escape from the zones that were soon to be locked down. Apart from causing newspaper article around the world, this has greatly increased the emergency, potentially infecting zones that were safer before. I do not want to generalize saying that it is typical Italian behavior, but it is indeed typical Italian behavior. Thankfully, the numbers show that the trend of infections is stable or decreasing, and while this will need some time to be proven true, it could hopefully mean that the first wave of CoVid-19 has reached its apex. But, suppose this is true. Thanks to our disorganization and everything but united front, other countries are just now beginning to experience what we are experiencing now: the numbers of infections in the US are roughly following the projections based upon the cases in Italy; this might mean that, after the apex of the crisis will be passed in Italy, the country could get infected again by another one, and so on until either a vaccine is produced or everyone left will have a natural immunity against the virus. Of course, this comes from a completely uneducated point of view, but it seems to me very likely a possibility that we will have to suffer through the consequences of submitting any danger to the health to the need of keeping the

markets open until China had managed through the initial outbreak. Since this has not happened, I can just hope that we will get through this quickly and learn from our mistakes. Another point that could raise a few questions are the news about Trump's "America first" ideals: it would seem that Trump has been pressuring the Chief Executive Officer of CureVac, a German pharmaceuticals company, towards selling the exclusive for an experimental Covid-19 vaccine to the US. The proposal has been impeded by the German government that hopes to develop and then distribute it to Germany and then Europe. This event raises several ethical questions, also because the German government might not be able to stop the selling via normal legal ways. I find very significant and to the point the words of Michael Hunter, the leader of the German Institute of Economy: "We are now facing a global threat and it is not admissible for a chief of state to try and secure possible cures exclusively for his people." An article from "Corriere della Sera" ends with the following sentence: "A world dominated by a "my country first" logic has no hopes to successfully fight global pandemics.". In my opinion, this extends to every kind of global issue: even ecological problems show a disparity of efforts, with Europe being the greenest zone, followed not so closely by the US and then by China, which has little interest in lowering its pollution because doing so would reduce their productivity. We have reached a point in which economical interests are so widely spread that it is impossible for all of them to pursue a common goal in a mutually beneficial way.

Recalling all that has been said, I have outlined the main similarity between the beginnings of the 20th and of the 21st century: both are moments in which some ideals have been changed by an event. Specifically, WW1 had shown what was behind the apparently shining new century: an age of political tensions and of dictatorships based on propaganda and exploiting of the mass society. In 2020, the outbreak of the CoVid-19 and the harsh measures that have been taken have reminded us that our advanced society cannot protect us from everything. Solution to the problems that arise should be taken, in a globalized world such as ours, in a concertized way between all of the nations and specific institutions have been created to do this, such as the UN. To react to the problem at hand we should have acted in such a way, but we did not because of the economical consequences such an action would have had. So now, Italy is on lockdown and other nations are on the verge of a crisis. To add more, individual behavior, which can severely damage the overall situation, seems to be reckless and inconsiderate in some cases, and downright criminal in others. In conclusion, I want to repeat what I have quoted before, that a "my country first" attitude is of no use against any worldwide issue, and I just hope that, after this has passed, we will be a little more mature.