

THE POLAR STAR IS NO LONGER WHAT IT WAS

He was disoriented. He had to admit it. He didn't know which direction to take. So, after a few months of indecision, he decided to go in search of the North Star. Since he was little he had heard that, when someone was lost, they had no choice but to find the north. He later learned that disoriented, lost and disoriented were very similar linguistic terms.

The world had become a convoluted puzzle, where the pieces hardly fit together to give an overall vision. He lived in continuous tension. The news coming from the different media was increasingly alarming. New technologies made it possible to know the immediacy of events that, in turn, were quickly extinguished to make room for others. Social networks gave excessive credibility to certain aspects and falsified others. In short, facts and opinion were not separate. In these conditions it was very difficult to focus on what was important and leave aside what was accessory. As his grandfather said, separate the wheat from the chaff.

He had been the presenter of an independent radio news program that he himself had devised and developed, in which he had managed to talk about the most exalted national events and the most complex international events, in a calm way, without falling into excess and exaggeration. However, even though his audience was very large, he had the impression that he was speaking to no one, as if on the other side of the studio only emptiness existed and he was the only living character in a cursed series. His work was meaningless. It was evident that he was on his way to reaching a depressive state.

For more than twenty years, every morning he thanked the tweeters for following the program and the subscribers for their participation in its economic support. A majority of the latter aimed to increase ideological plurality so that the news could be approached from different points of view. He would always remember the words of a patron at the beginning of the morning of February 26: "I was listening to the program from Germany. I was, following the words of one of the vice presidents of the government at the time, a young man who had left my country not out of necessity, but out of the desire to go sightseeing. High-born hypocrisy from a command chair where life must have been very good and it was not cold. I was lucky and found a position as a tour guide, you were the umbilical cord that linked me to my land. During this time I paid the monthly fees to collaborate with you. Then, with the pandemic issue, I lost my job and we returned home with my pregnant partner. Now, for a few months, we have both been working and we are

subscribers again, but this time in the name of our daughter. We consider it to be the best gift we can give you. Continue along this line, guys. You give a lot of peace and calm.”

He chose the bicycle to carry out his adventure, he would have liked to do it on a skateboard, but it was not an appropriate means of transportation for three reasons: he planned to cover long distances, he was forced to carry a minimum of luggage and supplies and he already had a age. One Sunday morning, when the wind and rain were getting worse, ignoring friends and family who told him to wait until the storm passed, he kissed his partner, his son, his daughter-in-law and his granddaughter, raised hand as a general greeting to everyone present and left for the world with the intention of understanding it in depth because only in this way could he resolve his existential anguish.

This trip allowed him to shed light on the darkness in which he had immersed himself in recent years, but not as he expected, but in a contradictory way. He was able to observe some issues that made him lose his faith in human nature and certain acts that made him feel proud of being a man.

Some presidents were capable of publicly betting firmly on a peace treaty between two opposing armies while selling weapons to both contenders. What's more, in certain cases the meetings were held in the capital of a country that was considerably increasing its GDP at the expense of the massive sale of weapons. In these same wars, the greatest casualties occurred in civil society, especially women and children.

Authoritarian regimes little by little were “in crescendo.” Armies no longer carried out coups d'état. In some cases, political rivals were imprisoned and subsequently, all of them, without exception, died because their health had gradually or suddenly worsened. In others, it was judicial decisions that joined forces with the opposition to discredit democratically elected governments and undermine their legitimacy.

The agents of some exchanges were betting on raising the price of food in order to increase the profits of the companies they worked for, even if this meant an increase in famines in certain areas of the planet.

In some developed nations, the so-called first world, year after year, both the percentage of poor and millionaires grew at the same time, reaching the point that having a job might not mean an escape from destitution.

A good part of the young people from different countries carried out work tasks paid with the minimum wage, they did not charge overtime, they had to be aware of WhatsApp twenty-four hours a day because they could be claimed by their superiors at any time of the day. Furthermore, they had serious difficulties in accessing housing due to the high

price of rents and mortgages. Only by getting four or five together on the same floor could they address the expenses, otherwise they would only have the option of living at their parents' house. Given these conditions, births fell precipitously year after year. The lack of empathy not only in politics, but also in society as a whole, was striking, both towards the problems in which youth were immersed and towards the marked decline in the birth rate.

Although the excessive use of fossil fuels, such as gasoline and diesel, was one of the determining causes of climate change, long lines and traffic jams could be observed when students left and entered schools. automobiles. Only the immigrant boys and girls walked in groups or alongside their parents.

Every day, millions of people purchased enormous quantities of food and other products wrapped in cardboard and plastic. Some didn't even bother to use the recycling bins, but instead threw them in the bins or directly on the ground. Those who acted correctly never realized that recycling was not the best solution, but rather reduced their acquisition. It seemed that few people seemed to know that only a small percentage of plastic was used as raw material for other purposes and that the rest was taken in large quantities to landfills in poorer countries or dumped into the oceans. On the other hand, large factories used these materials without any type of restriction, except in very few exceptions.

On Christmas holidays and the coldest days of the year, those in which thermometers read several degrees below zero, homeless people sleeping on the street were taken to nearby shelters to spend the night protected from the elements. However, during the other days of the year they could not sleep on the sidewalks in the center of the cities because the buildings placed architectural elements that prevented them from lying down with any comfort, in the best of cases they could only sit.

When a native, a rare act, passed by an immigrant of another race and said good morning, good afternoon or good night, the latter wore a radiant smile and responded to the greeting with enthusiasm and satisfaction. That meant that he was no longer invisible and felt treated with dignity and respect.

Groups of neighbors and other volunteers dedicated a few hours of their free time to collaborating with different NGOs altruistically in the acquisition, storage and distribution of baskets for the neediest families in the neighborhood.

Early childhood educators and other people selflessly took turns serving boys and girls under three years of age from humble families in places with toys, books, audiovisual material and a school cafeteria. The cost was financed by the city council, by an NGO with

thousands of members that addressed the issue of school meals at a national level, and by the neighborhood. Some primary and secondary school teachers continued the work when these boys and girls were older.

Some agricultural companies only took on workers who were truly in a precarious situation. They signed a contract that included their salary in accordance with the national agreement, their inclusion in social security and respect for all their labor and personal rights. For their part, the day laborers committed to working eight hours a day, including time for lunch, dinner and a discontinuous rest of about twenty minutes. If the factory managed to reach a certain sales level, each operator received a non-negligible bonus. The businessmen advertised their products and their respectful way of production in different media. Its fruits and vegetables became the most demanded in much of the nation.

In every city there were some citizens who helped abandoned dogs, stray cats, pigeons and sparrows survive. There were even town councils that were concerned about the well-being and control of animal colonies, through economic agreements with veterinarians and protective associations. It was nice to see that life continued to flow in the middle of so much asphalt.

Finally, after several months of road and blanket, our protagonist arrived at the Arctic Pole. There he came face to face with a huge amusement park: lights, music, hotels, shopping centers, attractions of all kinds and the sale of tickets at cosmic prices to go out in a space vehicle to the stratosphere and contemplate, using the most technical elements advanced, the different parts of the North Star.

“Stories without mufflers” (2006 -)