

An Anarchist Perspective on the Coronavirus Pandemic

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March 21, 2020

On a particularly chaotic Friday afternoon, Piñera inaugurated the nationwide chain reaction to the pandemic. Since the beginning of March, fear of the virus has slowly entered the conversation: between the agitated return to classes that seeks to be a replica (like an earthquake) of the October Revolt, the massive feminist demonstrations, the radicalization of the reactionary sectors and the imminence of the plebiscite, it is taking on more and more importance.

The international situation is no less complex. Last year saw the beginning of a new worldwide wave of revolts against capitalist normality, and the much manipulated “institutionality” seems to be collapsing from all sides, leaving room not only for insurgent creativity but also (and never so easily differentiated) for populism and fascism of all kinds.

The economy has been losing speed for some time, but the trade war between two declining powers, the manufactured rise in the price of oil, and the paralysis caused by the coronavirus, built the perfect storm to leave the stock market and its tangle of speculative fictions in free fall.

It is in this context that the disease arrives in our territory, with the state of exception still fresh in our memories. It starts in the upper classes, and we almost rejoice before remembering that they will not be the only ones to suffer its consequences. The government, always late, announces its measures. Clearly they are not enough, and their only objective is to ensure the free movement of capital. Some (the ones who see conspiracies at every corner) whisper that it is a strategy to cancel the plebiscite, that is apparently so dangerous. But we are clear that the intelligent fascist votes to approve, and that the government’s incompetence requires no more justification than its own class interests.

However, we have also seen how the situation has developed in other countries with a more advanced stage of infection. Simulations of insurrection, urban warfare and absolute states of emergency have been deployed on the streets of China, Italy and other parts of the world, with varying degrees of success. The Chinese state, famous for its repressive capacity, concentrated all its efforts on the containment of ground zero but, juggling to keep its economy afloat, left its regional governments free both to resume production and to sustain the quarantine. Beyond this it has been by far the country whose quarantine has been most efficient and effective (we won’t mention the United States, whose public policy is reduced to covering its ears and shouting loudly).

The Italian case is notable, more than anything else, for its resistance to quarantine measures and “social distancing”, a nefarious euphemism that refers to self-isolation, forced precarization disguised as “tele-working”, hoarding of essential goods, and the denial of any form of community. When the prisoners (who have always been overcrowded and immuno-compromised) were banned from receiving visits, the biggest prison revolt of this century began: 27 prisons were taken over, many people were killed, police and prison officers were kidnapped and hundreds of prisoners escaped.

In Chilean territory, the situation is uncertain. Pharmacies and supermarkets that were recently looted will soon be out of stock due to widespread panic. Public transport, a permanent battleground since the beginning of the revolt, will soon be avoided like the plague. The government has already banned gatherings of more than 500 people, but by now anyone who is listening to the government is listening. The military, who we assume have refused to leave again to keep what little legitimacy they have left and to be able to preserve their privileges in a new constitution, will not have so much shame if they can disguise their actions as public health. Real public health, on the other hand, weighs less than a packet of *cabritas* (translation note: a popular popcorn snack). And we have no idea what will happen with the plebiscite.

If elsewhere the pandemic was a trial of insurrection, here the insurrection seems to have been a trial of pandemic and economic crisis. Let’s keep the flame of revolt alive, and organize to survive.

We will now outline some measures that we consider worthy of generalization, more of an inspiration than a programme:

- Looting and organized redistribution of basic goods
- The use of student occupations as collection centres, shelters for homeless people and, of course, street fighters.
- The boycott of any form of distance work or study, so that the quarantine becomes a general strike.
- The immediate release of all prisoners as a central demand.
- Mass evasion in private clinics, free medical care for all.
- Rent strike, taking over empty houses.

The hood is the best mask!
Evade the isolation of capital!
Deny immunity as a police device!
The crisis is an opportunity, raise your fist and attack!

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Retrieved on 2020-03-28 from anarchistsworldwide.noblogs.org
Via Contra Info, translated into English by Anarchists Worldwide.

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