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Capitalist Hypocrisy

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Pandemics have always existed, in the past diseases have wiped out billions of lives around the planet. The context in which each one develops, the pre-existing conditions that allow its evolution and development, and the impact they have on species (human in the case of the new coronavirus), are directly related to the prevailing order that governs human relationships in society. In other words, capitalism and the commodification of life on Earth play an important role with regard to the origin, spread and consequences of diseases considered pandemics.

Capitalism is based on the premise that the planet's resources are scarce and therefore must be regulated so that the participants of society can benefit from them. Clearly, the very premise of this system is based on the objectification of life on Earth. The water flows, the existence of infinite species of plants and animals, and the earth itself, are regarded as sources of material wealth. That is, as objects that can be exploited at the cost of suffering and destruction, for the benefit of those who hold economic and military power in the various regions of the world.

Nothing can be expected from this predatory system for which money, luxury and consumption are above a free and natural exis-

tence. Many lies can be told about the benefits of capitalist progress, but the truth is something else, something verifiable in the facts. Progress brings nothing more than destruction: devastation of natural environments, changes in water flows, subsequent droughts and consequently misery or death for plant and animal species (human and non-human) who live thanks to the balance of the environment. However, there is a privileged group of humans who do benefit from all this and at the expense of others.

This destruction imposed by capitalism is harsher for many animal species that have fewer ways to defend themselves against the frantic advance of technologies in modern societies. Specism is one of the pillars of this system and is also reflected in the objectification of animal bodies, used for different purposes. One of the most cruel is embodied in the food industry. But what does this bloody industry have to do with Covid-19? Different scientific sources (not that this really gives them more value) have affirmed that the virus originated through zoonotic transmission. In other words, it jumped from non-human animals to human animals. There is much speculation about Chinese citizens eating bats which would have triggered the spread of the virus. This has provoked a lot of talk about the eating habits of other cultures, many times bringing racism to the surface. Aside from that, zoonotic transmission occurs under certain conditions when the environment of the species that carries the virus touches with that of the species that can be infected. This contagion may be due to a change in these conditions, such as changes in proximity and regular contact among other things. These changes provide the basis for the evolution of the virus, which can lead to a more contagious and deadly virus, for example. And as already mentioned before, what better than capitalism to change the conditions of the environment where a virus with these characteristics can exist? Mainly, capitalism generates these changes in two related ways: (1) through the animal industry, specifically factory farms and (2) through the devastation of nature.

never leaving aside the fight against power and domination. The concern for life on the part of the system has never been such, and it is time to make this clear.

For insurrection and total liberation
For the self-determination of peoples
For the destruction of the prison society
Fire to the state and bullets to its lackeys!

In history there are already many examples for (1). In the 18th century, in the territory dominated by the English state, three different pandemics arose related to animals considered cattle. In this territory, capitalism cleared the fields to replace them with a “monoculture of cattle”, mainly of animals infected by precapitalist pandemics imported from Europe. The consequences of these pandemics were much greater than in other territories since the concentration of these animals changed disproportionately due to the advance of the industrial revolution. The outbreaks were concentrated in large dairies in London where the environment was ideal for the evolution of viruses.

Given the advances of the English state in science and medicine, they managed to contain these pandemics. However, it was much worse in Africa where the same pandemics arrived due to European imperialism, manifested in the colonization of the African continent. The military campaigns spread the viruses in the local cattle, causing a great mortality which was reflected in the death of almost 90% of the cattle. This led to an unprecedented famine in the pastoral societies of Africa. And also had as a consequence for the European powers a greater facility for their imperialist expansion.

Another example is the case of the Spanish flu, one of the first outbreaks of H1N1 influenza and a precursor to more recent outbreaks such as the bird or swine flu. It spread in the second decade of the twentieth century. According to studies so far it originated in poultry or pigs on farms and infected soldiers on duty who travelled to Europe. The rudimentary forms of concentration and intensive treatment on these farms made them the ideal places for the development of viruses. Although it is considered to be one of the most lethal pandemics (about 25 million people died in the first 25 weeks, according to some studies), the virus itself was not very different from others strains. Perhaps the high mortality was due to generalized malnutrition, urban overcrowding and unsanitary conditions in the affected areas, where urbanization around

the developing industry was increasing. Clearly, the spread of this pandemic benefited from growing trade and the First World War.

Concerning (2), the devastation of nature is unstoppable for this system, since it goes hand in hand with so-called progress which is the cornerstone of this order today. In all territories, capitalism devastates forests, jungles, beaches, mountains, glaciers and an endless number of environments inhabited by many species, many of which are carriers of diseases and viruses that human animals were perhaps not aware of. The changes in the environment of these species (the destruction of their habitats) forces these species to survive in other ways; going further into the wild where humans have not yet reached, or adapting to life near human settlements, towns or even cities. These changes can lead to an evolution of the diseases they carry, as well as more exposure for those who were not close to these “dangers”. On the other hand, many indigenous communities use the sale of animal meat to survive, since their environments and ancestral ways of life and alimentation have been devastated and there are not many other options. And clearly, each time the city advances, more species are at risk of being hunted by those who now need to survive in this way. When this cycle continues, it is a matter of time for people to become increasingly exposed to new diseases and viruses. It is not surprising that the pandemic could have originated in a city like Wuhan. Since it is a highly urbanized society and also industrialized, with large steel and concrete industries, which reflects the devastation that capitalism has left in its wake. Covid-19 is no exception.

Following these arguments, let us think of governments who use the power of the state infrastructure to perpetuate the capitalist system and promote indiscriminate progress at the cost of devastation. Isn't then the position of the different governments faced with the current pandemic hypocritical? How can they give so many speeches and take palliative measures for the degrading health system, pretending concern for people's lives, when they are responsible for the conditions for this virus to have spread?

When we talk about cynicism, it is not even necessary to think only about this aspect. The conditions in which most people live in all territories are marginality and exclusion. Conditions that lead to a life with few hints of dignity, since the inequality generated by poverty is extreme. It has never been among the priorities of governments that this changes. All this sounds more like taking political advantage of the situation and an opportunity to implement reforms that reinforce repression and improve the tools of the State to continue its domination.

The Covid-19 virus is real, it has killed thousands of people around the world and continues to do so every day. But this is not something new. Those who live in prison, kidnapped by the state, know it well. Health and sanitary conditions have always been very poor, and now it is not different. Governments have shown no interest in their lives; the demands of the prisoners to improve sanitary conditions in this context of pandemic have been answered with beatings, mutilation, torture and death. Also the indigenous societies in the world know well the cynicism of the different governments. In Abya Yala [name used by some indigenous people as an equivalent for the American continent], the indigenous people know it for centuries. The European empires came to plunder the territories, bringing death and destruction. Not only at the hands of their swords and rifles, but also through many contagious diseases such as smallpox, tuberculosis, flu or syphilis. These diseases finally depleted the population of the cultures of the territory much more than any weapon. The hypocrisy is evident and continues to this day. Hunger, Ebola, malaria, the bombings in the Middle East kill thousands of people every day, many more than Covid-19 and have been around for much longer. But they are not as much a cause for concern as the new coronavirus. Is it because now the privileged classes of first world countries are also being affected?

The call is to not believe for a single second in the words of the rulers, never to trust the state and progress. As free individuals or communities we can face the pandemic, with mutual support and