

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Issues > Internationalism (issues) > Solidarity: Pandemics, epidemics (health, internationalism) > **Pandemic and economic crisis: For an internationalist solidarity**

Pandemic and economic crisis: For an internationalist solidarity

Tuesday 31 March 2020, by [FUENTES Pedro](#), [PRADO Tito](#) (Date first published: 26 March 2020).

These notes are a contribution to promote debate among internationalists, and all sectors of intellectuals, scientists, political organizations moving towards finding a response to the serious global crisis that has caused the capitalist system. We need to find a common way to face it. We take this initiative which is open to suggestions, additions and contributions to help you find it.

Pandemic and economic crisis shake the world

We live in dramatic moments all over the world. We are in a situation of humanitarian crisis on such a scale that it is as if we were in a world war. In this war there are no peoples confronted, who attack us is a virus, a tiny particle that has already spread throughout the world and threatens the life of the whole planet. In this war, all humanity suffers. As in all wars, there is also a confrontation between classes; in the struggle to stop the epidemic, there are different social interests, a main conflict between the capital and life; between the workers and the poor on one side and the big corporations on the other. it exists and is profound. The dominant bourgeoisie wants to save its system of capitalist exploitation. We internationalists are in this war thinking about saving humanity from catastrophe (not capitalism) and in this struggle against the pandemic defending the interests of the workers and the people. We are in the front line defending the health workers, the factories that cannot stop their production because it is indispensable, the employees of commerce.

There is a deeper social contradiction that comes to light showing that there are immense class inequalities between rich and poor, the latter being the ones who will suffer most. We have to help the organization of the neighborhoods, of the communities that suffer most from the pandemic. At the same time, and this is the main objective of these notes, to help the international anti-capitalist vanguard gather around the basic points of an urgent program to appear within its possibilities as an alternative to the interests of capital.

In this war that affects all of us, the owners of capital that dominate the planet have a common object: they agree that the pandemic cannot affect their interests, they want to use it to compress wages even further, to transform means of production to increase exploitation. But there are differences about what measures to take to face the urgency and save the system that has been dragging a crisis since 2008.

On the side of the working people, those of us who postulate the end of capitalism want to save life on top of everything else, and that is why we are going to this war in unity of action with all those who are taking positive measures at this time, but knowing that we will definitely take different paths because what this crisis is about is not saving the bankrupt system but the entire planet, starting by preventing the cost of this war from being paid by the people.

In this increasingly globalized world, this war is global and is spreading throughout the entire planet. It began in China where 3245 people have died so far. It has spread to the Mediterranean; Italy with 8165 deaths and Spain with 4366 deaths are the most affected and the number of dead only increases day by day. It spread to the USA where there are already 70,000 infected with 1,000 deaths, expanding throughout the south of the continent. There are more than 500 000 infections in 180 countries, with around 20 000 deaths from this pandemic to date. Although capitalism has globalized misery, in Latin America and Africa this war will be harder because the inadequacies of state services are gigantic and because life is more precarious in the young people of Peru, in the slums of Brazil, or in the Villas Miséria of Argentina. Also on the African continent or in the Middle East where the Palestinians of Gaza surrounded by Zionism live. In these places where water is scarce, basic sanitation is lacking and health care is stagnant, death can be much greater.

Without a doubt, it is the greatest tragedy of this century. It is not something normal that had to happen because viruses exist. Viruses are part of nature and will be less dangerous when science dominates them. But, for now, the threat is very serious in this planet already sickened by the systemic crisis that we live under the capitalist globalization. There are two epidemics: the coronavirus and the capitalism. We have to fight the coronavirus epidemic when we already suffer the epidemic of this system in crisis, with a terminal illness that survives agonically because the workers and the peoples are having trouble providing themselves with radically alternative political directions to the domination of 1% over 99% of humanity. But with this crisis it becomes more evident that this system does not work to improve the life of society except because of the capitalist accumulation of the few, the corporations, the banks and the rich. This system is experiencing a structural, multidimensional crisis that has been chronicling since 2008.

Humanity does not want to die and a vanguard of scientists, health workers and those who suffer the most from the epidemic are beginning to understand with this lethal virus that the greatest pandemic is capitalism. Science is already winning a first battle against anticipation for those who preach rulers who intend to be messianic like Trump and Bolsonaro. The fight against the coronavirus creates fear and despair. Confinement can physically exhaust people's heads, but it doesn't paralyze them. In this struggle to end the Covid-19 pandemic is moving the consciousness of the workers and the people.

The pandemic strips away a neoliberal capitalism that has plagued the public health service system, where the advances of medical science are at the service of profits and not of the population. Private clinics equipped with high technology, but public hospitals scrapped for the health of the poor. The capitalist irrationality of health being a commodity to profit private investment has been imposed. We are facing a system that not only attacks people's lives but the life of the planet. We are beginning to see that this system has become a predator of mother-earth with strativisms and deforestation that disrupt the necessary balance between man and the environment, leading to the world a climate crisis that could put a limit on life on earth. The struggle for life is also the struggle to save the planet. The ecosocialist cause that seemed a utopia years ago when it was formulated now becomes an immediate necessity. The pandemic throws light not only on the need for a new model of production but also of life, of another relationship of man with nature, of another form of social life that becomes indispensable to organize society.

It is beginning to be understood that we need another world order that allows the distribution of wealth, that preserves the planet, that provides education, health and housing for all. It is more intelligible today that the alternative is "socialism or barbarity", as a historical disjunctive. Either we save life and the planet, or it sinks into a tragic course of death.

It's becoming more mature that we need to socialize health, that there needs to be a single system for everyone. The pioneers of this campaign were the young socialists of the USA who have grown

enormously and taken shape in the political and social movement in support of the candidacy of Bernie Sanders, who raises the “Medicare for all!” flag and socialism as north in the bowels of the most powerful empire in the world, polarizing from the left a clear alternative to the ultrarreactional government of Trump.

Governments want to stop the epidemic without compromising the interests of corporations and banks. But differences have emerged between the capitalist as in every serious crisis. Some more irrational say that they should not stop the economy and that they have to go back to work without caring about their lives. Those who most defend this policy are the authoritarian governments: the criminal Bolsonaro in Brazil, who does not want to stop production or close schools, who clearly defends the economy against life. In this way, it indicates the promotion of “ethnic cleansing” during the pandemic, a process that will weaken the poor black people who are the most vulnerable sector. Trump is not left behind, he is saying that the churches must be full during Holy Week. And there are the most prudent governments, in which the capitalist bureaucracy of China, the European governments, and even here in Latin America some presidents think that to stop the virus and save the system it is necessary to give palliatives to ensure the quarantine and open the public reserves, even if in a limited way with bonuses, basic income, health spending, etc.

In the face of this important social situation, despite the quarantine, the neighborhoods and communities are mobilizing in a creative way, taking advantage of the social networks to fight for public opinion and demanding concrete measures to cover the social emergencies of the moment. It is not just a matter of accepting palliatives, but of demanding more to ensure people’s lives. And the cost needs to be paid by the big companies that have made immense fortunes with their neoliberal policies.

In parallel with the demands that governments opt for the life of their communities at the expense of the superprofits of the bosses, there are new forms of popular solidarity that are organized in communities, neighborhoods, health workers. In Italy, strikes challenge the non-closure of industries whose production is not essential at this time of social tragedy. In Chile, involved in a popular rebellion against neoliberalism, contract workers from the Andes are mobilizing to paralyze copper extraction, while the cabildos remain in collective deliberation about what attitudes need to be adopted to protect the most vulnerable. In many places there are experiences of social assistance for precarious and homeless workers. In Brazil, slum dwellers have been distributing basic food baskets.

As progress is made with concrete measures to halt the advance of the coronavirus, workers and the oppressed will be better off for the next pandemic to come: the very serious economic recession which, according to the chief economist of the OECD, will be greater than the Great Depression of the 1930s. At that moment, all the capitalists will unite so that the crisis will be paid for by the workers and the people, while we will defend that they pay for it, bringing the world to the brink of extinction.

It’s time to manage a great world movement in defense of life and nature. There are conditions for this. The coronavirus attacked the world when it was convulsed by large mobilizations and rebellions against neoliberal governments and especially the most authoritarian. In the Andean mountain range, one of the epicenters was Chile, but also in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia there were great fights. The Arab spring is reborn in North Africa and the Middle East. In Asia the great mobilizations began, in India and Pakistan, and the democratic struggle continued in Hong Kong. In Europe, France showed again why it was the place where the first contemporary revolutions took place.

Recently it was the transport strike as before it was the turn of the yellow vests. There are mobilizations against Putin’s authoritarianism in Russia and in the United States, together with the growth of socialism, there is a wave of strikes.

In these struggles, a new radical vanguard has emerged, one that leads women and young people. Now in this war, the internationalists have to deal with all the means that we expect to indicate a common emergency program for all these sectors.

In this 21st century there have already been serious attempts to unify the international vanguard. With the mobilization in Seattle came the alterglobalist movement that confronted capitalist globalization, giving rise to the World Social Forum that has played a very progressive role during a period that has already allowed it to have a forum to coordinate the international struggle, even calling for a mobilization throughout the world against the war in Iraq.

Latin American governments independent of the empire in the US also emerged on the back of great mobilizations and social explosions at the end of the 20th century; these opened a new course, but they did not sustain and prosper, but left a valuable experience. The next wave was the Arabic spring and the indignant Spanish, Greek, who fed new internationalist expressions and gave way to Occupy Wall Street. Bernie Sanders and her political revolution in the United States emerged from this process and is a response to the crisis in the northern country. Also the feminist movement that grows and continues to accumulate partial victories, such as the right to abortion in more countries. There are strong democratic processes that defeat authoritarian regimes in Sudan and challenge others in Algeria and Iran.

The forces that we want to change the world and save lives can act in a more united way on the international stage. There is a common struggle that can be summed up in immediate proposals:

- 1.- ensure quarantine to stop the epidemic as advised by all medical science.
- 2.- no large company, except for basic services, can force its workforce to work. Remuneration must be guaranteed while social isolation lasts.
- 3.- basic income for all who ensure the maintenance of their families.
- 4.- suspension of collection of electricity, water, rents, interruption of mortgage collection, debts and bank interest.
- 5.- public centralization of all hospitals and the health system to ensure the attention of all in a free way.
- 6.- public and private resources to face the emergency; that large companies pay their tax debts, which contribute 20% of their capital to a humanitarian fund.
- 7.- suspension of the payment of the external debt; first the health of the people, then the commitments with the creditors. Review of the external debt.
- 8.- Security based on social organization; popular control and of neighborhood councils; no military and repressive exits that prevent the people from opining and being proud.
- 9.- Immediate industrial conversion so that factories of non-essential goods, at the moment, dedicate themselves to producing medical materials (mechanical ventilators, gloves, stretchers, etc.), so lacking in the most impoverished countries. May trillionaire military spending be converted into massive investments in research and medical science.
- 10- Confiscation of profits made in recent years by large companies that do not comply with WHO directives.

11- Taxation of the wealth of the great billionaires. If the governments of many countries previously justified the unfeasibility of this proposal with the argument that there would be capital flight to dynamic centers of capitalist accumulation, in a world with production almost completely paralyzed by a new recession, it no longer makes sense to stop adopting effective measures of income deconcentration.

12- For a new global and ecosocialist New Deal that has as its “number zero” priorities the interests of workers and a new model of production in transition to non-predatory energy bases of the environment.

Nothing will be like before. The masters of the world can try to reverse the crisis as in the past by condemning humanity to greater suffering but do not have it with them because the crisis generated by the Covid-19 virus is also the expression of their crisis and their greatest failure. Something new is to be born from the hand of this resistance that extends as a powerful antidote against the pandemic of capitalism, against social exploitation and the extermination of the planet. Something new and superpowerful will emerge from this crisis. New forces and new leaders emerge in all this resistance to the different forms of oppression of big capital. It is necessary to unite them in solidarity, in struggles and in political contention. But now that the perfidious face of big capital, which puts its interests before the life of the planet, is becoming evident. It is up to us to take the position of our doctors and nurses to be on the front line against the next pandemic, that of capitalism in its greatest crisis and therefore most dangerous. But the forces of history are on our side, it will not be possible for a class system to last forever, from every crisis its gravediggers emerge.

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P.S.

- <https://portaldelaizquierda.com/en/2020/03/11973/>
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