

Making good use of epidemics

or hygiene-mania in the service of capitalism's authoritarian reset...

I. Coronavirus: global pandemic or virus scam?

A spectre haunts Europe: the spectre of the coronavirus. All the powers of old Europe have united in a Holy Alliance to hunt down this spectre: the Vatican and the German Chancellor, the French President along with his loyal opposition, the Belgian cops and the Italian military.

However, contrary to the alarmist hegemonic narrative, Covid-19, which we hear so much about, is really only different from other infectious diseases because of its novelty – and the frightening character that this confers on it: its extreme dangerousness is therefore, for the time being, mainly in terms of potential. Otherwise, from what is currently known:

- Globally, 18,000 people have died in 100 days since mid-December, compared to the 2.6 million people worldwide who will die from acute respiratory infections in 2019;
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO) itself, 80% of coronavirus infections are benign or even asymptomatic;
- On 24 March, official figures reported 22,300 “severe cases” and 1,100 deaths in France, representing a 4.93% lethality rate which is “relatively low”, especially compared to SARS in 2003. Even if the number of deaths is not exhaustive, notably due to the failure to take into account deaths in EHPAD [rest homes], this rate is nevertheless overestimated. In fact, the limitation of tests to only those with severe symptoms, officially justified for logistical reasons, makes it possible to show a lethality rate that is all the more threatening because it is artificially biased – asymptomatic people or those with mild symptoms are not tested and are therefore not counted;
- In France, according to the Director General of Health Jérôme Salomon, 7% of the deceased are under 65 years of age. This means, implicitly, that 93% of the deceased are over 65 years old, a percentage that is exactly the same as during the last severe influenza epidemic in France (13,000 deaths during the winter of 2017-2018);
- According to Geneviève Chêne, Director General of Public Health in France, people affected by the coronavirus often have existing health issues... like, therefore, the seasonal flu – about which we hear very little, even though it kills 250,000 to 500,000 people in the world every year;
- In Italy, 70% of coronavirus victims are men, with an average age of 79 – this should be put into the context of the life expectancy of Italian men, which is also 79; according to the latest figures from the Higher Institute of Health (ISS), almost 99% (!) of those who died had at least one other pathology: heart failure, diabetes, chronic kidney failure, etc.
- In Germany, where there are more than 16,600 cases of infected people, the use of mass screening and masks has resulted in a coronavirus case-fatality rate of... 0.3% (46 deaths);

- According to a study published in the American medical journal *Jama*, involving 45,000 people with Covid-19, the lethality rate is especially high among the elderly (8% in the 70-79 age group), but is 1.3% among people in their fifties, 0.4% among people in their forties, 0.2% among those under 39 and 0% among children;
- Even though the dumbed-down mainstream media are still constantly feeding us the line of heroic public hospitals being overwhelmed by the coronavirus, private clinics have still not been officially requisitioned; the icing on the cake of this surreal situation is Lamine Gharbi, president of the Federation of Private Clinics and Hospitals of France, who urges the government to requisition private facilities: “Today, unfortunately, while public capacities have been exceeded, **private establishments remain under-utilised**. Many of our beds that have been released remain empty. **In the east of the country, we have freed 70 resuscitation places that have not yet been fully allocated** this Saturday by the Regional Health Agency, where public hospitals are overwhelmed. **However, patients are being transported by plane to the south of France**. I therefore solemnly ask that we be requisitioned to support public hospitals”;
- Finally, in spite of the interested scepticism of the media but also of the French government (neither the former nor the latter apparently wanting this episode of Covid-19 to reach a premature happy ending), a remedy seems to already exist (with a vaccine in the testing phase).

In reality, there is every reason to believe that, behind all their false posturing, our low-life politicians are well aware that this infectious disease would appear to be distinctly unremarkable:

- The Minister of National Education J.-M. Blanquer admitted in the most relaxed manner that the coronavirus would probably affect more than half of the French population – proof if ever there was of its relative innocuousness in its current form;
- The National Assembly itself constitutes one of the major clusters from which Covid-19 is spreading over French territory; but, much though one might regret the fact, it has to be noted that not one MP is currently at death’s door... which did not however prevent Macron, that second-rate *Conducător*, from evoking in his passionate speech of March 16, 2020 “*the most serious health crisis that France has known for a century*”.

In addition, the *goose-stepping en-marchers* did all they could to ensure that Covid-19 spread easily across France.

- On January 24, 2020, Agnès Buzyn, then Minister of Health, estimated that “*the risk of spreading the coronavirus in the French population*” was “*very low*”... yet, a few days after this statement, A. Buzyn warned Prime Minister E. Philippe of the possible calendar collision between the peak of the Covid-19 epidemic and the local elections;
- On 6 March 2020, Emmanuel and Brigitte Macron attended a performance at the theatre “*to encourage the French to go out despite the coronavirus*”;
- On March 9, 2020, Aurore Bergé, spokeswoman for ruling party La République En Marche (or should that be La Répression En Marche?), gave a speech with a very reassuring tone, affirming that France was “*extremely prepared for this type of health risk, with city doctors trained in this area*”;

- Finally, while the epidemic has been limited in Taiwan and South Korea thanks to widespread screening and the wearing of masks, the LREM government has refused the use of these tried and tested methods and preferred to opt for the indiscriminate caging (pronounced: “*confinement*”, it’s less scary!) of 67 million people. In terms of health, the Taiwanese and South Korean examples prove in any case that lockdown is not the only way to defeat the coronavirus.

Incidentally, there is no evidence that, as regards vulnerable groups (prisoners trapped in the jails of the French state, elderly people living in rest homes, minors dependent on child welfare, women victims of domestic violence, etc.), widespread lockdown will save more lives than it will generate human damage (suicides and depression linked to visiting bans, increased contagion generated by proximity, etc.).

Before moving on, we have to mention the age-old role of useful idiots played by left-wing (in the broadest sense) political organisations. Experienced in the “*fabrication of false fights for the present and so valiant in pushing down everything that is already falling*”, these organizations focus their criticism on the insufficiency – certainly undeniable – of the means at the disposal of the public health system to combat the epidemic – even, in the case of O. Faure (PS), J.-L. Mélenchon (LFI), J. Bayou (EELV) and F. Roussel (PCF), asking La Répression En Marche to further restrict public and individual liberties! Certainly, the unceasing application of austerity reforms to the hospital civil service, explicitly endorsed by Macron himself in April 2018, has necessarily contributed to degrading the quality of a health system once considered by the WHO as the most efficient in the world. However, by opting for this single reading of the current crisis, social democrats, Stalinists and other rotten alterglobalists totally validate the misleading narrative which – despite the available data – presents the Covid-19 as an “*unprecedented threat*”. For if, as Mediapart seriously asserts, the “*intensive care units are preparing to assess patient priorities*”, one cannot nevertheless forget that – as a consequence of the organised state of disrepair of the health system – the public sector lacked intensive care beds before the current health crisis, that is to say as early as the aforementioned flu epidemic of 2017-2018.

Just-in-time management, applied to hospitals in the same way as to supermarket chains or car dealerships, or to the manufacture of surgical masks, results in a lack of stocks (in this case of beds and medical equipment) to deal with unknown perils: it is absolutely incompatible with the flowering of ecological and health disasters that this system produces. The slightest unforeseen event thus results in thousands of perfectly avoidable victims who, for lack of a reserve of available beds, go directly from the hospital to the morgue. It is therefore not the particular dangerousness of this virus that this foretold carnage demonstrates, but the morbidity of a system that finds its *raison d’être* in both looting and the non-reproduction of life. Nor is it the incompetence of governments or their “unpreparedness” that this crisis reveals, but their function as good managers of capital.

As a result, the upstanding citizens who take up the refrain “*Stay home!*” may believe that they are doing a service to health care personnel who fear – quite legitimately – that they will have to deal with an unmanageable influx of patients in the coming weeks, but they are in fact, above all else, collaborating in a totalitarian experiment which is unprecedented both in terms of its means (house arrest – by simple administrative decision and under penalty of sanctions – of hundreds of millions of people) and of its scope (numerous countries involved).

And the fact that, in the hospital system of the world’s sixth economic power, there is a need to prioritize between patients to be saved and those to be abandoned to their fate, sounds like an irrevocable condemnation of the capitalist mode of production that makes this aberration possible...

and not – with all due respect to the various churches of the left – like a call to urgently re-establish a fantasized welfare state that will never return anyway, except as a farce.

II. Causing the crisis rather than suffering it: when radicalized rulers convert to the degrowth theses and carry out economic sabotage

So, how do we describe this collective delusion around Covid-19 if, from what we currently know, the virus is not particularly serious *per se*? Above all, it reflects the fearful panic of certain bourgeoisie in the face of the state of the world economy. Let us recall, in case they are of use, these few factual elements prior to the “coronavirus crisis”:

- Germany, the European Union’s leading economic power and the world’s third largest exporter, narrowly escaped recession in the third quarter of 2019; for the whole year, Germany’s growth was only 0.5%, and its automobile production fell back to its 1997 level;
- Estimated at 2.3% in 2017, French growth was only 1.7% in 2018 and 1.2% in 2019. In the last quarter of 2019, wealth production contracted by 0.1% and public debt represented 99% of gross domestic product;
- The economy of Italy – the third largest in the euro zone and the eighth largest in the world – has come to a standstill: it experienced a recession at the end of 2018, then a growth of only 0.2% of GDP in 2019, including a fourth quarter during which output fell by 0.3%; Italy’s public debt represents 132% of its GDP;
- In the third quarter of 2019, the economy of China – the world’s second largest economy – experienced its worst growth rate in 27 years (1992);
- Japan, the world’s third largest economy, experienced the worst fall in its GDP in five years in the last quarter of 2019 and, over the year as a whole, the wealth produced grew by only 0.7%; its public debt represents 238% of its GDP;
- Although it is experiencing a growth cycle of historic length, the US economy was nevertheless marked by an increase in wealth produced in 2019 (2.3%), a significant drop compared to 2018 (2.9%);
- As early as December 2019, relaying the OECD’s fears in particular, the “economic” sections of the media made this kind of statement: *“The OECD forecasts that global growth will level off next year at 2.9%, its lowest level since the global recession of 2009 [...] A slow suffocation of global growth, under the effect of digitization and climate change, at the risk of stoking social anger: this is the scenario that economists fear for 2020 [...] in the longer term, the globalized economy is not only coming to the end of a cycle, but is approaching the end of an era, that of the surge in trade and high-speed industrialization in emerging countries [...] Ludovic Subran, chief economist of the insurance giant Allianz, sees a “growth purgatory” Worldwide. If there is one, “the next systemic shock will probably not arise in finance, but will be exogenous”.*”

This gloomy picture is not surprising: in order to emerge from the gigantic financial and then economic crisis that began in 2008, the central banks revived a capitalism which was in the process of drowning... by making it drink even more water – in other words, by stimulating credit through resolutely expansionary monetary policies. If the latter allowed the bourgeoisie to buy itself a decade's reprieve, it was at the price of a constant increase in public and private (household, business) debt and a correlative reduction in its room for manoeuvre when a major endogenous or exogenous shock sooner or later occurred.

The ruling class was, therefore, faced with an insoluble dilemma. The longer that accommodative monetary policies propped up millions of zombie businesses and household purchasing power, the harder the economic landing would be in the next crisis.

With the economic shock therefore looking all the more severe as it would be artificially delayed, some governments that adhere to the *shock doctrine* have attempted an unprecedented poker move, *revolutionary* in many ways: using Covid-19 as a pretext to give birth to the economic crisis by Caesarean section, rather than passively waiting for it to appear. The coronavirus thus acted as a *deus ex machina*. And lockdown was the instrument that allowed this attempt to *reboot* the capitalist mode of production, its principle as bold as its results were uncertain.

III. National political disarray, global economic impasse, the European project under threat: the bourgeoisie offers an iron heel as its only perspective

In 2009-2010, the H1N1 flu affected at least 10% of the world's inhabitants, with a gruesome toll of between 150,000 and 575,000 deaths. However, the health problem was not solved by sequestering a quarter of humanity under the guise of stopping the spread of the epidemic. What about 2020, then? Did an individual, a group of people really have the crazy idea of bringing capitalism to a halt on the basis of simple administrative decisions, of putting 1.7 billion people under house arrest, of transforming entire countries into open-air prisons? Is this the work of an obscure chief of staff in a ministry in Paris or Rome, of an anonymous stalino-capitalist lost in the corridors of Chinese bureaucracy, of a slightly overzealous European Commissioner, of a twisted employer think tank? Or has this solution been imposed on certain governments as a matter of course, under the effect of impersonal structural laws, without them even being aware that they are making a *choice*? One day the genealogy of this chain of *sanitary coups d'état* will have to be drawn up, but for the meantime we can only make the following comments.

Like all Leninist dictatorships based on the fable of “democratic centralism”, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has the habit of managing the masses – whom it distrusts instinctively, and for good reason – by coercion. This mode of government being in the very DNA of the Maoist bureaucracy, it is logical that, in the province most affected by the coronavirus, the solution of total lockdown was chosen even though other solutions exist to absorb this type of epidemic (*see above*).

But while the PRC's economy has already recovered from the coronavirus crisis and is expected to grow by 3 percent this year, the Chinese bureaucracy probably did not anticipate such plagiarism of its expeditious methods by bourgeois-democratic regimes: it seems to have nothing to gain in the

short term, as its resolutely export-oriented economic model will necessarily suffer from the imprisonment of 1.7 billion potential consumers. And all the more so since Chinese domestic demand is not capable of taking up the slack.

In our Orwellian world, it is not surprising that China now serves as a model for the entire “free world”. At a time when “citizens” are fully traceable, when the slightest act or gesture of any individual can be tracked, when facial, voice, digital and thermal recognition, video surveillance and geolocation are becoming widespread, and when gadgets such as apps or internet-connected objects are being distributed so that the people being monitored are themselves made responsible for providing information to the police (a great victory for “self-management”), the world of telescreens and flying patrols (today they are drones) described by George Orwell in *1984* is no longer a fiction but a reality, a reality that in many ways is far more advanced than the model described in the novel.

Italy was the first country after China to use lockdown. Not born of universal suffrage, born of a vulgar *palace revolution* that sent the sub-fascists of the Liga back into opposition in September 2019, the current government is composed of the PD (centre-left) and the “populists” of the 5-Star Movement (M5S). This coalition, as baroque as it is unpopular, is necessarily unstable because it brings together a party with “anti-system” pretensions and a party embodying the said System to the point of caricature. Did it, foreseeing the potential damage that the Covid-19 could do in a country as ageing as its health system, choose the option of lockdown with the sole aim of clearing itself in the event of a health crisis? It is true that the generalised locking-up of the population amounted essentially, for the government, to a game of “heads I win, tails you lose”:

- either lockdown makes it possible to stop the epidemic, in which case it will have demonstrated in retrospect both its usefulness and its effectiveness;
- or the human toll is high, which confirms at the very least that the narrative around the “extreme dangerousness” of the coronavirus is not just propaganda.

With 4,800 deaths, including 800 on March 21 alone, the lockdown has not yet proven its medical effectiveness. But it will have at least found a fervent follower in the person of Matteo Salvini: the leader of the Liga not only supports the principle of lockdown, but he also criticizes the government (which he considers too lax) for not applying it in a more “Chinese” version... It seems as if there is quite some common ground between the spiritual sons of the *Duce* and the descendants of the Great Helmsman!

As a remedy for the degeneration of the capitalist mode of production, lockdown has, like any drug, its undesirable side effects. By insisting on the serious health threat that the coronavirus would constitute and by decreeing the recourse to telework, the Conte government had not anticipated the reaction of some blue-collar workers: because, if Covid-19 is dangerous for those employees who work in offices and administration, who are asked to stay at home, then, in all coherence, it must be dangerous for them as well. Strikes – at first spontaneous, then taken up by the trade union bureaucracies – broke out in many sectors, demanding an extension of lockdown to non-vital companies. Faced with these elements of the industrial proletariat defending the principle of containment more consistently than they were, the government coalition and the employers had to partially give in. The *lockdowners* found themselves locked down in their own stupid trap.

On March 6, E. Macron had not yet realized the putative political benefits he could expect from a generalized locking-up of France's 67 million inhabitants. On that date, he still had the honesty to compare the coronavirus to a flu epidemic, and he said: "*We must be able to hold out. If you take measures that are very restrictive, it's not sustainable.*" Surrounded by mediocre people, but quick-witted, the tycoon of the Élysée is flexible to the point of excess in terms of ideas. This makes him an inveterate traitor, but probably also an individual capable of thinking outside the box. He did, after all, give the title *Revolution* to the book setting out his agenda. Already massively regarded as a dictator because of the violent repression of the Gilets Jaunes movement, then of the protests against the "reform" of pensions and several unpunished police crimes (pleonasm), did he still have something to lose by engaging in a clean slate policy that was undoubtedly "disruptive"?

For Macron has certainly succeeded in advancing the bosses' agenda by giant steps since his election, successfully leading a class-based offensive against private sector employees (Macron ordinances of 22 September 2017), those of the SNCF (end of the status of railway workers by the law of 27 June 2018 "for a new railway pact") and those of the State (law of 6 August 2019 "for the transformation of the civil service"), as well as against the unemployed (decree of 26 July 2019). But this victorious *blitzkrieg* was only achieved at the price of record unpopularity and an increase in class antagonism that was all the more dangerous for the dominant powers because popular anger took on forms, during the Gilets Jaunes movement, that the *union and party-political police forces* were unable to bring under control – the GJs even taking the fight into the enemy's own neighbourhoods.

The class struggle having found its translation – in an obviously distorted way – on the electoral field, the first round of the local elections revealed the levels of disillusionment with not only the presidential majority (12.5% of the votes at the national level), thanks to its "structural reforms" and constant scandals (Benalla, Ferrand, Delevoye, etc.), but also – perhaps even more worrying for the bourgeoisie – with its much-publicised fake opposition: the fascists of the RN, whose electoral lists are struggling to reach 2.5% of the vote. Since the people had repeatedly betrayed the trust of the authorities, wasn't it tempting, therefore, to have them dissolved (B. Brecht)? Inspired perhaps by the methods of the Turkish autocrat Erdogan, Macron therefore decided, at the same time as lockdown, to postpone the second round of voting.

Since the presidential announcements of March 16, the government has been walking a very uncomfortable tightrope: on the one hand, to assume its policy of generalized lockdown of the masses and, on the other hand, to guarantee to the maximum extent possible the continuation of work and productive activity. While the isolation of employees, teachers and managers allows an unprecedented development of telework by transporting exploitation to the home and reinforcing the atomisation of individuals, this high water mark of commercial alienation cannot, however, be applied to all professions. The result is an endless quarrel over the definition of essential or non-essential sectors and activities, with the government initially seeking, as in Italy, to argue for a broad definition and only giving way to a certain extent in a second stage. It is in fact essential to keep in operation – against the will of the workers concerned – certain strata of the productive apparatus and of the State machinery in order to ensure that the physiological and safety needs of the population are guaranteed at a minimal level. Otherwise, there is no guarantee that the fear of the "coronavirus pandemic" would be enough to keep the herd obediently locked up. Yet, in case of looting and violence, En Marche's neo-degrowthers would risk losing the initiative and, at the same time, their audacious bet.

The lockdown of an entire country in peacetime was not something that was seen coming because it was so unprecedented, but retrospectively it now appears in France – that cradle of the counter-revolutionary war – as being just the latest in a long line of assaults on social and individual freedom... There is, in fact, a real Ariadne's thread that runs from the launch of the "Vigipirate plan" (1995) to the lockdown (2020), via the proclamation of a state of emergency (2005, 2015), its integration into ordinary law (2017), the "Anti-Riot" Act (2019), the law on internal security (2001) and the law on "gang violence" (2010), not forgetting, of course, the *carte blanche* granted to a sadistic police force massively committed to the far-right politics of the RN. But this willingness of the *goose-stepping en-marchers* to put history on hold and the class struggle under a bushel seems illusory: when an ultra-minority government based on a shadow party is only clinging on to power thanks to its mercenary thugs, when the whole of society is ultimately treated as an enemy, then subversion can likewise arise from everywhere.

This international lockdown is already expected to have major economic consequences, particularly for the European Union :

- According to Bruno Le Maire, France will be in a 1% recession this year, i.e. a level of production 2.3 points below initial forecasts;
- The CAC 40 lost 39% of its value in one month;
- The recession in Germany (which has China and France as its first and fourth trading partners respectively) could reach 9% this year;
- Both the ECB and the European Commission expect a considerable recession in the EU;
- According to the lowest estimate, the current economic crisis will destroy 5.3 million jobs worldwide.

In France, the emerging response to this *provoked collapse* includes austerity measures, a massive policy of socialisation of corporate losses known under the name – dear to a certain left & right (LFI, DLF, Gaullist dinosaurs, the remains of Chevènement's left-nationalists) – of "nationalisation", a €45 billion corporate support plan and €300 billion in bank guarantees. These measures, which will inevitably cause the public deficit and debt to explode, come along with moralizing injunctions from the Prime Minister that "*all of us must, collectively, make a great effort to enable our country to get back on its feet.*" By virtue of this, the first "efforts" are already required from the proletariat: they are translated, in the "law instituting a state of health emergency" quickly voted though by parliament, into a restriction of paid holidays and weekly rest days.

Victims of an odious public health blackmail (your choice: "Stay at home! Save lives!" or "Join the great army of French agriculture!"), the *de facto* requisitioned proletarians are asked to work in silence, while those now considered surplus to requirements must have the good taste to stay in their homes. And if all the guilt-tripping from the highest level of the State, based on this insane new hygiene order, don't work, the dominants have also lined up the big stick – in no uncertain terms.

In the country of Molière and Pétain, in the space of a week, the fine for failure to comply with the lockdown was increased from 38 to 150 euros, reckless "escapees" were held in custody on the

highly fanciful grounds of “endangering the lives of others” and, in the wake of this, repeat-offending became punishable by six months in prison, a fine of 3,750 euros and community service hours. In the first six days of generalized caging alone, more than 90,000 (!) fines were imposed (times are hard for public finance, so every little bit helps!). Believing himself to have appointed in 1942, the Paris police prefect Didier Lallement (sic) seems quite simply unstoppable, with a wave of draconian declarations and liberticidal excess. In agreement with their chief, some Parisian cops even had the great idea of giving fines to homeless people for not respecting the “stay at home” order. In Nice, a city run by Les Républicains, a drone circles in the air and orders the fugitives to return to self-imprisonment. In Béziers, the fascist mayor would not have missed the opportunity to impose a curfew for anything in the world. In this joyous climate of hunting the poor and the proletariat – or just simply manhunting – the LR MP Eric Ciotti and the RN MP Marine Le Pen have still somehow contrived to call for even more liberticidal measures... Why not, for example, the collective suicide of all French MPs, including those two, in the name of the precautionary principle, since it has now been proven that the National Assembly is a cluster from which the coronavirus has been spreading?

On the other side of the Alps, in Italy, drones are also being used and the police are carrying out 200,000 checks daily. In addition, more than three people coming together will be considered a gathering and punishable by a fine of 5,000 euros.

In Spain, failure to comply with the decreed “state of alert” can lead to penalties ranging from a 100 euro fine to one year’s imprisonment. On 17 March alone, police in Madrid and Catalonia issued more than 800 fines.

Finally, in Belgium, perpetrators of non-essential travel are liable to a fine of up to 4,000 euros and/or three months in prison. In Ans – which is located in Belgium and not in the Islamic Republic of Iran... you could be mistaken! – *“the police are now tracking down citizens who kiss each other in public places”*. Offenders risk a fine of 250 euros... which is better than a whipping or a stoning, but it leaves one wondering: when will the constabulary launch “sanitary searches” to make sure there is no sexual intercourse going on in the homes of all these peasants, potential carriers of Covid-19, HIV, clap and bad-taste tattoos ?

Less amusing than a Belgian joke, the continuation of this widespread lockdown is still plagued by uncertainties. In our opinion, some developments on a global, continental and national scale seem foreseeable but some questions remain:

- While a number of countries are rallying, albeit at the cost of internal tensions, to the logic of imprisoning their populations – which therefore amounts to sabotaging any prospect of economic growth for 2020 at least – others seem hesitant (Great Britain, the United States, the Netherlands, Russia) to go down this path. For how much longer, knowing that, given the internationalized nature of value chains, lockdown applied elsewhere will inevitably have repercussions on their national economies? In a globalized world, the economic downturn will not stop at state borders and reluctant governments will have to reconsider their position. Otherwise, they will quickly suffer from the disadvantages of lockdown (recession) without benefiting from its precious advantages in terms of restrictions on political freedoms (which are very useful in quashing any proletarian resistance in times of crisis). Like the virus that provides its justification, containment will therefore be contagious... the extent to which it will be so remains to be determined.
- Against the backdrop of a generalised recession in all the EU’s flagship economies, a second

debt crisis in the space of a decade seems inevitable as the factors that triggered the first crisis are still present (high level of national public debt, lack of economic and political solidarity between states in the area, poor coordination of budgetary policies, etc.). If it is attacked by the financial markets, will the euro be able to survive other than through a generalization of “Cypriot-style bailouts” – the countries of the zone having to get rid of the last vestiges of bourgeois democracy in order to pass on such a bitter potion to populations washed out by ten years of austerity?

Otherwise, some points have undoubtedly been scored by the rulers who gave birth to this absurd Pandemonium bombshell, of which the astonishing nature has left the masses in a state of paralysis:

- It borrows, by perfecting them with modern technology, elements from brown and red fascism – resulting in a degree of control of the public, private and intimate spheres that even the little Georgian with the moustache would have been jealous of;
- Infantilizing public health blackmail (“Stay at home and save lives!”) (“Remember to cheer on the caregivers every night at 8pm!” and even “Shave yourself to fight against coronavirus”!) relies on the development of good-citizen reflexes and on the rarely-denied propensity of the petty-bourgeois strata to crawl up all the political dead-ends that the spectacle provides for them (“We are all Americans” after September 11, 2001, “Vote Chirac” in 2002, “I am Charlie” in 2015, not to mention “Free Tibet” and the likes of “Free Aung San Suu Kyi”);
- While the right to laziness and refusal to work have been among the historical watchwords of the subversion camp from Paul Lafargue to the Situationists, our rulers are now going so far as to authoritatively exempt from the grind hundreds of millions of employees in sectors considered non-essential for the needs of their real-time economic crash test;
- A big up to the degrowth folk who, given the meteoric rise of their ideology in the space of a week, will no longer need to freeze their arses off selling their literature at street markets in the middle of winter.

The verbal provocations of the deceased scum Thatcher (“*There is no such thing as society*”) are a good fit with present reality; momentarily, society no longer exists and the exploited are at rest – cloistered at home, on the iterative order of the rulers. But, unlike with the Second World War – which had massively destroyed the means of production and the labour force and thus prepared the ground for the post-war boom – economic problems remain because constant capital is still there, along with the proletariat. It may well be a convincing tactical victory for the bourgeoisie on the political level, but the widespread lockdown solves nothing on the economic one.

1929, 1973, 1987, 2008, 2020... the crises of the capitalist mode of production follow one another and each time contribute to reshaping the forms of class domination. The Great Depression led to Nazism in Germany and was settled by the second world butchery. The crises of the 1970s and 1980s provided the ideological fuel for the rise of the neoliberal revolution at the expense of the Keynesian paradigm which had been quasi-hegemonic since the Liberation. Finally, the bourgeoisie only negotiated 2008 at the price of a Pyrrhic victory, with the deliberate inflation of debt levels making a future economic cataclysm inevitable (*see above*).

What will come out of 2020? The difficulty for the exploiters lies in the total absence of mobilizing narratives to be passed on to the masses. Where Nazism (the conquest of living space, the superiority of the Aryans, the 1000-year Reich...), Bolshevism (the construction of the socialist paradise, the new man or, more prosaically, the access to land ownership for the small peasantry...) or the Latin American juntas (the entry into consumer society, social ascendancy into middle-class status) matched the decimation of society with promises that could resonate with the psychology of the masses, class domination today fails to rely on any “great project” capable of mystifying the people in the long term and bringing social peace. The carrot is gone, only the stick remains.

In France, the widespread lockdown of the masses will probably be hardened and prolonged. According to official polls, more than 4 out of 10 people (still) trust the government to manage the crisis. But the only valid question is: how many will soon understand that the government *created* the crisis?

With no social base worthy of the name in the country, the LREM government must also now reflect on this thorny issue. Perhaps it expects that the *permanent emergency regime* will allow it to keep the country under its control until 2022. If, as a liberal intellectual and former speechwriter for Christine Lagarde says, “*managing an epidemic is not a simple medical matter. It is the reflection, and very often the vector, of a political project*”, then one does not need to be a genius to be able to deduce from LREM’s management of the coronavirus the dictatorial nature of its political project. But this rancid passion for lockdown will not lock down passions in France for long. History has already nailed this vandal government, and the class whose interests it serves, to an eternal pillory. It is now up to the proletariat to finish the job.



GARAP

<https://garap.org>
March 2020.