

News from the state of emergency

A collection of reflections and notes written
during the spring of 2020 in Italy



On January 30, 2020, the Italian government
proclaims a state of emergency.

On March 9 it imposes a nationwide quarantine.

On March 11, the WHO declares the Covid-19
pandemic

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23th of March 2020

Viruses don't come from another planet

Diseases always reflect the ways of living (of producing, eating, moving around, etc.) of a given society. Any cure that doesn't start from this fact – which today implies a clear questioning of industrial society – can only stop the effects of diseases without going back to their causes. Not by chance the first Coronavirus hotbed developed in an area in China of great urban concentration and heavy industrial pollution. Not by chances the first hotbeds in Italy developed in the most industrialized and polluted areas. If nocivities and the environmental turmoil they cause are not removed, health emergencies will happen again.

The Health System

Health workers making protection vests out of bin bags and use bedsheets to make face masks; continuous alarms re limited resources for intensive therapies. How could all this happen? That's what they don't say in the daily fear news so that they don't have to talk about responsibilities. From 1978 onwards, between left and right governments, the Health System has suffered the combined effects of cuts and privatizations. The progressive transformation of the Health System into a company has reduced structures, personnel, wards, and therapies that were not profitable, in particular cutting down everything that was linked to preventive medicine. For this reason hospital beds have been halved and reduced to less than half of the emergency ones. As medical and political metaphors are becoming more and more

explicitly military (the virus is the aggressor, the body is under siege, society is at war, the government is deploying the army), the real enemy of individual and collective health disappears: the logic of profit.

To contain the virus means freeing everybody

From Saturday 7th March and throughout the entire week that followed protests have been rising in about forty prisons all over Italy. In at least thirty of these, real revolts break out. Over six thousand prisoners take part in the uprisings with units destroyed and set on fire, fire to prison police cars, prisoners on roofs, mass escapes, screws taken hostage and the prison of Modena “actually” closed down thanks to the damage. The State shows its muscles: antiriot police and prison police special squads intervene, the screws surround the prisons arms in hand, the army is deployed in Puglia to block those who have escaped, in Modena relatives say they heard shots distinctly. Then beatings and mass transfers. The bottom line is very heavy: 15 prisoners dead. Their deaths are quickly covered up, they talk about deaths “mainly” (and the others?) caused by overdose of psychotropic drugs and methadone.

The spark that ignited the fire is the suspension of visits intended as a ridiculous measure of contagion containment (visitors are potentially infected... not the guards?) along with the awareness of facing the risk of an epidemic like mice in a trap (cases have already been reported in Brescia, Milan, Voghera, Pavia, Lecce, Modena and Bologna), but the powder keg is constituted of inhuman living conditions: endemic overcrowding, the guards’ violence, impossibility to access alternative measures.

Amnesty and pardon: prisoners’ requests are at this moment nothing more than a public health measure to limit the harm caused by the spreading of the infection in overcrowded environments (up to 8 prisoners per cell). If in Iran 70,000 prisoners with sentences of less than five years were released in order to contain the contagion, in Italy, after protests, revolts and an actual State massacre, those with sentences of less than six months were given the possibility to be put under house



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**Solidarity is our Weapon!
2020**

on the cure of the person in their totality and globality» do without denouncing the environmental causes of diseases? The air we breathe, the food we eat, working conditions, means of transport are the very bases of a territory. Do pollution, the manufacture of food, accidents at work have anything to do with medicine or don't they? That the medical art requires competence and training is certain; that its extreme specialization tends to make [doctors] perfectly incompetent in what is human and social is just as certain.

Precisely this human and social competence is what is missing, and we must build this together. After denouncing cuts and privatizations, do we want to say something about the structural causes leading to millions of people falling ill? Do we want to say that the very zoonotic diseases such as Covid-19 – now 70% of new infections – are caused by deforestation, intensive animal farming, industrial agriculture and disproportionate urbanization? If we can suggest examples to follow, which go well beyond specific professional fields, these are certainly not the great barons of medicine (who have always kept silent about the various health counter-reforms), but the “barefoot doctors” who, along with the workers, denounced the danger of asbestos or along with city and country dwellers the impact of various petrochemical toxicities. Not by chance these figures came forth in the years when people discussed and struggled around everything that concerned society, i.e. they took care of the cure of «the person in his/her totality and entirety». In this respect not only do we hope that mobilizations will resume and continue, but also that they intertwine. We have already seen only too well that “illness” produces isolation.

Text handed out on 29th May in Trento, during an initiative organized there and in twenty-one other cities by “doctors in training in permanent mobilization”

arrest and those with sentences of less than eighteen months under house arrest with an electronic tag. In fact the situation is worsening rather than getting better (the law in force already envisages house arrest, subject to the approval of a surveillance judge, for those with sentences of less than three years, and without electronic tag). Not to mention the fact that in Italy 34.5% of prisoners are awaiting trial and have no sentence to serve. These weak measures, however, wouldn't have been achieved without the prisoners' decisive and brave demonstration of strength, as they were aware that reality didn't offer them any salvation: either imprisonment and death or revolt and life.

General strike!

Even if it is being proclaimed on an institutional level that all non-essential activities must be stopped, many factories are still open: even those with very high concentration of workers being in close contact with one another during production and in canteens. (And at the same time police with sirens are patrolling cycling lanes, parks and woods hunting for “plague-spreaders”. And at the same time mobile phone companies are carrying out mass filing in order to “trace” individual movements). As in the rest of Italy, strikes in several factories (Dana, Pama, Fly, Siemens44, Mariani, Sapes, Tecnoclima, Ebara...) were reported in Trentino, and in addition many workers decided to stay at home even if there wasn't any strike. It's not just an understandable reaction of fear due to the virus, but a contribution to everybody's health. These strikes must be supported and extended to all non-essential production lines. If health is not compatible with profit, so much the worse for profit.

All in the same boat?

These days we're seeing a massive injection of nationalist rhetoric on all channels: “All together against the common enemy”. In this tricolour tale life conditions that are not at all the same for everyone disappear as if by magic (in order to stay at home, you need to have one and be able to keep it...). But let's look a little bit further. If it's impossible to make forecasts of the aftermath, one thing is certain. The economic

effects of this “health crisis” will have a well differentiated weight on society. Millions of people will have the practical problem of finding what’s needed to live. Even the loans from the European Central Bank won’t be at all free, but they will impose new austerity measures that will strike mainly the poorest. To push the boat ahead will be those who are already half under the water. Let’s remember it when the notes of the national anthem disappear.

News from the state of emergency (Issue 2)

30th of March 2020

Responsibilities in reverse

The daily scaremongering news is covering up general and specific responsibilities for the ongoing epidemic, putting them on those who don’t stay at home, “plague-spreaders” against whom more and more repressive measures are to be demanded (the military carrying out police functions, internet tracking of the population, invitations to snitch, authorization of the use of drones...). Who dismantled the Health System in favour of the logic of profit, worsening a situation that could have been dealt with quite differently? Who kept the factories open? Who closed the schools on 20th February and shopping centres only on 12th March? Who was it? Perhaps those walking in the streets or on cycle or footpaths? And more: is it single “looters” or a system that has made the price of face masks for hospitals increase 600%?

What security?

They’ve been deafening us with shouts of “Security!” for decades. More cameras, more controls, more police, more prisons! Then a virus epidemic arrives, and from the back of the mind and the not-said of television it comes out that if trucks and logistics were to stop there would be nothing left to eat in the supermarkets within a few days. What kind of security can people who depend on a technological and

News from the state of emergency (issue 10)

29th May 2020

Thoughts on health and medicine

While the government is conceding us the freedom to work, consume and go for walks (so-called Phase 2) – but not to demonstrate – the fact that doctors in training are declaring themselves to be in permanent mobilization seems like a good sign to us. As well as the fact that the situation that generated in hospitals in the face of Covid-19 is being explicitly linked to the cuts (37 billion euros in the last ten years alone) and to processes of privatization of health care. If there is a lesson to be learned from the mass experience we have lived through and are still living, it is that the defence of individual and collective health cannot be delegated and that it is urgent to open up spaces of discussion and initiative in various territories, spaces that can unite health workers with the rest of society. Not only because “starting again” as if nothing had happened is the most senseless thing one could do; but also because in the absence of resistance the enormous public debt that the government is creating with loans to the banks and big companies will involve more cuts and a more ferocious privatization. «Health is not for sale» can only be an invitation to struggle, therefore, certainly not a statement: in a world where everything is profit, health is on sale, and how!

Let’s start with a passage from your callout then:

«We are asking for the centrality of medicine in the territory be recognized, a reality that takes on the care of the person in their totality and globality. We demand that future general practitioners be guaranteed quality training, where the importance of a global and proactive management of patients is accentuated».

This means not only having the instruments to deal with diseases but also the will to prevent them. Can «medicine in the territory» that «takes

«Another essential battle for the future of society is the refusal of digital schooling. The troubled period we are living in is being turned into profit for the normalization of teaching at a distance through internet, and only teachers' and parents' vigorous reaction can prevent it. In spite of all the criticisms that can be made of the school institution from different points of view, the current period should show everybody that it makes sense to learn together and that for children it is precious to be in touch with teachers in flesh and bone».

«... Some of us have been denouncing the computerising of work for years; it is clear that extension of compulsive teleworking is a process to be stemmed by new forms of struggle, boycott, desertion».

Right now

«Right now that the internet and smart working are so important», the mayor of Rovereto complained after anonymous persons sabotaged five (perhaps six, it is not clear) cabins for telecommunication interexchange in the night between 14th and 15th May. Entrance to corrugated iron sheds was allegedly forced and the wires conducting the connection to the cabin and from the cabin to houses were allegedly cut. The “blackout” allegedly involved two thousand users, bringing “half an army of technicians” to the city in order to reinstate the service, which is supposed to take a week’s work. «Let’s free ourselves from technological cages», reads one of the writings left by the anonymous saboteurs.

Eighty years ago, someone...

In the 1940s Giaime Pintor, an antifascist intellectual who died at the age of 24 torn apart by a German mine, wrote: «Today in no civilized nation is the distance between vital possibilities and the current situation so great: it is up to us to declare a state of emergency». Now that the grip – between the industrial production of ecological-health disasters and the technological solutions that worsen their effects – is crushing us, it is up to us to make the state of emergency effective.

productive system which they no longer control have? You can't live from telework! Let's take advantage of this “break” to reflect.

Without taking back the land and self-managing our food sources, along with freedom and autonomy we will also be renouncing our security.

Telework

One of the ongoing experiments, along with police and military control, concerns work: how long and in what way can the economy continue if people don't leave their homes? What is “work” today? It is above all the multinationals with their IT platforms and various applications that profit from all forms of telework (whether imposed on employees or teachers). From every online activity – free or paid, it doesn't matter – the “web giants” acquire an impressive quantity of personal data which they analyse and sell. Everything is “data” that can be processed and transformed into commodities: tastes, opinions, tone of voice, facial expressions, a book quoted by a teacher, news concerning health, fear, the reaction to certain news, students' level of attention, etc. In the best of all possible worlds, even an epidemic – i.e. millions of people shut in at home but always connected – becomes excellent business. And a chance to justify the introduction of the G5 network, whose function is certainly not to enable contacts in a health emergency, but to generalise industries, machines, CCTV cameras and smart sensors. Fear is an ideal condition to push us more and more towards a world where human beings are governed by “intelligent objects” and those programming them.

Remote monitoring

The news that 40% of Milan's residents were caught far away from their homes through the control of cells activated by mobile phones caused a sensation. What's the news? The fact that mobile phone companies carry out mass filing on a daily basis is well known (even if few people draw any conclusions from this). What is new is that a health emergency is taken to openly justify something that exists well beyond the emergency and raises, or should raise, not a few ethical

and social questions. But that's not enough. For some time we have been subjected to incessant propaganda aimed at introducing "Korean-style measures" to Italy, i.e. the filing of contacts between people starting from intertwined control of smartphones, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth (to locate "users", not in a given neighbourhood but house by house, shop by shop). "Public" data would be filed and analysed by the authorities, the "hidden" (which any application creates on smartphones, even when it is deactivated) would feed the "intelligent machines" that control our behaviour and study our "consumer intentions". The government is happy, digital capitalism is happy. And us?

What's "essential"?

What cannot be stopped: IT infrastructure and war, during an epidemic indirectly reveals the foundations of society we are living in. That's why all weapons factories must stay open. That's why as we are shut in at home in front of screens, technological progress is accelerating and new 5G antennas are being installed. As proof that digital infrastructures and wars are increasingly intertwined, Tim "is teaching" the potentialities of 5G and artificial intelligence to the army, for the "brave new world" war. We are left wondering whether what we can't see isn't only a virus moving in the air but also the world they are setting out for us.

A few sensible proposals

They could those suggested by writings left on the windows of several supermarkets in Trento and Rovereto between 24th and 25th March: "General strike", "Close the factories", "Put down prices".

Meantime...

On 25th March there was wide participation in the general strike called by the logistics and factories sectors. On 26th March, in a supermarket in Palermo, some people filled up their trolleys and tried to leave without paying. Carabinieri and anti-riot police intervened on the spot and

In both cases, it is pointed out in the subheadings that these great technological innovations present «criticalities» and raise «many questions». Things that readers will find no trace of in the articles, full of the most servile praise. Reading them, they will find out that thanks to G5 they can download films on smartphones in a few minutes, but not, – even by mistake or using the formula «the malicious and prejudiced maintain...» – that they will be watched everywhere or that they will have far greater probability of getting cancer.

Of self-driving cars they will learn that they allow them to «read, eat, watch TV, make phone calls and – why not – sleep». And the many questions? They require smart cities scattered with sensors, influence routes, stops, purchases, insurance policies, widen the capture of our lives by giants such as Google... No, here are «the many questions»: «the cars need to prove they are 100% safe, and there is still a long way to go on this front».

«We won't allow the contactless world to establish itself»

With this title – the subtitle being "Call for the boycott of the Stop-COVID19 app" – a text signed by a few dozen people, associations and collectives came out in France. It is worth reporting some of the suggestions that this call ends with:

«These days it seems that many people are leaving their smartphones at home when they go out. We call for this kind of gesture to generalise and for the boycotting of private and public electronic tracing apps. More generally, we call on each one to think seriously about the possibility of abandoning their smart phones, and massively reducing their use of state-of-the-art technologies. Let's go back to reality at last».

«We call on people to learn about the economic, ecological and health consequences of the planned deployment of the network called "5G", and to oppose it actively. More widely, we call on each and every one to learn about the mobile phone antennas that already exist and to oppose the installation of new repeater-antennas».

reference to the Valdastico [motorway] (with the northern exit), the third lane of the Autobrennero, the ring roads in Trento and Rovereto, the works linked to the Brenner Tunnel.

That the boss of the industrialists, while claiming to carry out Major works with a disastrous impact on the territory (and on climate change) is mentioning sustainability and respect for the environment is indicative of how the logic of profit and the subjugation of language always proceed hand in hand. Sense of limits, involvement of populations, change in lifestyles, second thoughts aroused by the quarantine and other stories commentators have entertained us in the newspapers, on television or on the radio during the past weeks of house arrest? Here these are summed up by Manzana: “Research will find solutions, the market will find the way”.

The servants’ job

And research does find answers, and how. With a small detail: never question the meaning of the questions. The impact of greenhouse gases is leading us to ecological collapse. Shall we stop the race? Certainly not! Let’s try “Gestione della Radiazione Solare” (Srm) [solar radiation management], i.e. aerosol injection of sulphates into the atmosphere so as to deflect some of sun’s rays into space and so fend off global warming. Global warming causes acidification of the oceans, which in turn causes the destruction of the coral reef? At Milan Polytechnic they have devised a system to alkalise water artificially with the aim of containing the effects of industrial CO2 emissions.

Monitor

The TV guide given out weekly with the daily l’Adige is a small example of how the dominant ideology can be reproduced even in such a format. Going with the general trend, in recent weeks «Monitor» has dedicated a few small articles to 5G, and to assisted and self-driving cars.

patrolled the entrance of several supermarkets in the city the following days.

Calls to stop paying are multiplying on social media. As the emergency goes on, perhaps after months without any wages, more and more people will find themselves faced with the problem of satisfying their material needs. Perhaps situations such as the one in Palermo won’t be so rare: the need to take what we need will become quite clear to those who, simply, won’t be able to pay any more.

News from the state of emergency (Issue 3)

6th of April 2020

Nothing will be as it was before

That is what they are telling us. As industrial society can’t be put in question – an industrial society whose constant headlong rush will produce increasingly lethal and frequent epidemics –, we will have to push the accelerator of technological solutions even more. As deforestation, the frenetic extraction of raw materials, the poisoning of the air and water, intensive agriculture and breeding, artificial food production and the devitalization of human beings can’t be stopped, we will have to get used to cohabiting with pandemics. 75% of the new infectious diseases are transmitted to humans by wild animals whose natural habitat has been destroyed, then the role of “contagion carriers” is performed by the fine dust produced by pollution (as recently written by a member of the Società italiana di medicina dell’ambiente [Italian society of environmental medicine]). So? Shall we give back their space to what’s left of the wild fauna and stop this demented race? No. Full speed ahead, under digital command!

Nothing must be as it was before

That's what we say. Let's open up places for discussion and organization from below. In cities, neighbourhoods, towns. And let's face everything that concerns our lives together, from basic material needs to medicine, from the economic reorganization that will be fierce, to the direction we want to give to society. Don't let them tell us that we will have to pay for it, yet again. Don't let them talk to us about Great works to relaunch their economy, about automatization of production, 5G and other rubbish. The virus is not the cause but the consequence of the industrial disease. And that is where we have to start off from, finally.

International rent strike

This is a proposal that has been spreading in several countries (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Sweden Chile, Spain...) since 1st April. For example, in their appeal "to the entire working class and tenants to support a general strike and rent strike indefinitely", the Sindacato Inquilini [Tenants Union] of Gran Canaria write: «The current situation couldn't be more alarming, not only on a health level but also on an economic and social level. The measures adopted by the government after a state of emergency was declared in response to Covid-19, are openly anti-working class, are completely superficial (limited moratorium on mortgages), and don't care about basic needs: thousands of families living from day to day, surviving on badly-paid jobs, people who have been sacked illegally, families left with no income due to confinement; everybody has to face the impossibility of paying rent». Moreover, they propose: «Abandoned homes in the hands of trusts, financial companies and banks (particularly those that have been saved with public money) must be socialized and made available to thousands of people and families who are currently homeless».

Words and barriers

"A tyrant has upset our lives, and it's called coronavirus". Hospitals have become "trenches", while the dead are transported in military vehicles. In this way, war scenarios come to mind with all their symbolic

students "present" and half connected to the internet). «There are never obstacles for those who don't have principles», was recently written. And what are these principles? What ideas of freedom, "human nature" and social relations should be counter-posed to the mechanization of ourselves and of the world? The affirmation of certain values is perhaps the imperative ethical and practical necessity of this historical phase. Around the rebellious teachers, the parents who refuse to send their children to school, the students who won't supply their "institutional email" necessary for "distanced education", it is fundamental that a network of support, reflection and resistance be created. Probably the elements of refusal are more widespread than it is believed, even if they are spread out and timorous.

A start

A first discussion on these questions took place on Sunday 10th May at the No Tav space of Acquaviva and Resistente. For several hours, about fifty people from various areas of Trentino recounted how they have lived these two months of confinement, outlining ideas and proposals in anticipation of other meetings to try to ensure that there will be no return to normality.

News from the state of emergency (Issue 9)

18th May 2020

The master's voice

When presenting his « Sustainability Report » a few weeks ago, the president of the Trento Confindustria [general confederation of Italian industry] Fausto Manzana stressed the need to relaunch the economy while guaranteeing respect for the environment: «But this priority – he added – cannot fail to take into account that major works need to be undertaken both on a national level, to better connect our Country to the rest of Europe, and in our Province». Then he made explicit

more and more widespread.

Consciously, or by force

The issues of the degradation of life and working conditions and of an increasingly artificial society are surfacing at the same time. It will be difficult for us to stop this economy of disaster, unless we create collective spaces in which to organize ourselves against the growing misery and at the same time formulate an overall judgment on a system openly at war against the Planet and all its inhabitants. The resistance against the introduction of 5G will probably be one of these occasions. Another meeting ground could be that concerning health. In order for them to find support in the rest of the population for their struggles, critical health workers will have to begin to express themselves not only against cuts and privatizations but also against the structural causes (pollution and food adulteration for example) which ensure more and more patients to the industry they work for. It's precisely such a judgment that is lacking – in this sector as in all the others – as it is crushed under the burden of survival. Only spaces of direct communication and common struggles will be able to lighten that burden. After all, if this doesn't happen through the conscious block of an increasingly demented production, it will be «under the yoke of repeated ecological disasters that men will have to learn to separate themselves from a world of illusions».

Principle lines

While waiting for – or replacing – the app for contact tracing, the Italian Institute of Technology (whose director Roberto Cingolani is part of the task force instituted by the government to program the “return to normality” after the quarantine) has already elaborated and put on the market a digital tag that will ring if “social distancing” is not respected and which incorporates the data on the contacts with possibly infected people. The governor of the Liguria region wants to make it compulsory starting from the autumn. In the meantime, the ministry of education is planning to maintain “online education” also in September (half

and emotional **content. Because metaphors evoke images and expressions** concepts. Language is anything but neutral: it shapes opinions, enunciates relations that develop throughout the course of time. Words make the world. They act on each one of us and lead us to act, in one way or another.

Treating a disease as if it were a war makes people obedient, docile and, in perspective, designated victims.

The choice of one word or another is not a question of language, but of a political decision. Politicians: you are the advocates of fear and hatred against each other. In the virus you have found yet another occasion to mark out boundaries and erect barriers.

Now that we are the potentially infected

For weeks the shipping containers that the Austrian State had installed at Brenner in an anti-migrant function have been used for anti-Coronavirus control on those coming from Italy. The current “exceptional measures” should make us reflect on what has always been happening to the feeblest, the undocumented, that part of humankind worth exploiting for as long as is necessary then left to die or be deported. Beyond the privileges we no longer realize we are living from, are those who are sadly accustomed to a daily life of distances, controls, visas, “who knows when we will meet again”. While goods are speeding around and thousands of human beings are trapped on the borders of Europe, perhaps we will be able to see that the virus of borders is not due to disappear in the near future.

Beyond borders, the struggles in the prisons

Concerning the uprisings that broke out in the jails on 7th March, newspapers and television channels hastened to talk about actions dictated by “organized crime”. (Not by chance, the same script was later used to criminalize those who tried to leave supermarkets without paying for their shopping). Someone instead talked about a “organized plan” of some unspecified “anarchist hand”. It's unthinkable for the

State to consider that these are spontaneous revolts that can communicate quickly with one another, that have developed in the captivity of places of torture, years of beatings, endemic overcrowding, repellent hygienic conditions; otherwise it would have been told differently and more extensively. As a matter of fact revolts are also breaking out in Spain, France, Brazil, USA, Belgium, Venezuela, Iran, Peru, Sri Lanka, Colombia (where, in the prison of Bogota alone, twenty-three prisoners have died)... Now they are forced to talk about it. Even States such as Iran and Turkey have released 110 thousand and 90 thousand prisoners respectively. Even the UN secretary is calling on governments to take urgent measures against the spread of contagion in prisons worldwide, where 12 million and a half people are locked up. It is precisely the prisoners who first suggested to us that the huge state of emergency we are the prisoners of today can and must bring with it the occasion to free ourselves and others, looking beyond our own boundaries.

News from the state of emergency (Issue 4)

13th of April 2020

“Their viruses, our dead”

Every day we are submerged by data on the number of infected, the dead and those who pulled through. Even if the structural causes of the epidemic – the industrial looting of the natural environment and the imbalance in relations with other animal species – never emerge, some things are coming to the surface, for those who can fish them out of the sea of information. Over 70% of the dead had high blood pressure. In 95% of the cases there are risk factors that can lead to its advance, in particular, sedentariness and stress. Prohibition to leave home – with the due precautions – creates the conditions for more multitudes of sick people. Not to mention the devastating psychological consequences for all those who are going through housing and family situations as

Confirmation

On 6th May, Vito Crimi, deputy-minister of the Interior and political leader of the 5-Star movement, proposed to “allow” (too kind!) those who get the basic income or Naspi (unemployment benefit) to go and work in agriculture to make up for the shortage of foreign labour “without losing the right to that income”. As if nothing had happened, the 5-star guy (but he had been preceded in this by the president of PD in the Emilia Romagna region, Bonaccini: «Those who get the basic income can work there so they can give back some of what they are taking») says things as they are. It’s time to make a clean sweep of the archaic nineteenth century idea that a boss has to pay, and that to a certain job corresponds a relative wage, determined by the power relationship between boss and workers. From now on work will be a concession (a compulsory concession, that is to say an imposition), and the same goes for income (ever lower), which can be taken away by decision of the government – we have just had a taste of what they can do with a simple decree – and above all it won’t be in any way brought in line with the job done, or be the object of negotiation and conflict. Do 600 euros a month for working 12 hours in the sun seem little to you? You lose your benefit. Do you want to negotiate decent wages? Next please. Do you want a contract with hourly rates, overtime, holidays, days off, tax payments, possibility to go on strike? Crimi and Bonaccini are not saying anything about that, nor are other politicians, probably that’s old stuff for them. No small turning point to face “the crisis to come” (or is already here?): those who get benefits would be a supply of literally zero-cost labour for the bosses, and with no extra cost for the State, given that it is a question of funds (but it would more appropriate to say crumbs) already allocated and whose designation is already envisaged by law. A proposal symmetrical to the refusal to regularize undocumented immigrant workers, a workforce at extremely reduced cost for companies, at zero cost for the State. One more reason to struggle together, Italians and foreigners, against a new slavery, which has nothing of an emergency: considering the profits they guarantee, there is no doubt that these conditions, once imposed, will become permanent and

While it hasn't yet gained the consensus necessary to introduce the "Immune" app for the digital tracing of social contacts, the State has begun to envisage the obligation for prisoners on bail to have a smartphone so that they can be located. Replacing what? Electronic tags, whose production is entrusted to mobile phone companies (Fastweb).

The advancing of digital technology is making possible what past totalitarian regimes didn't even dare to imagine.

News from the state of emergency (issue 8) 11th of May 2020

A slippery slope

That's precisely there where we find ourselves. Even anything but radical economists are beginning to hypothesize four ways out of the current situation: sliding into barbarism; State capitalism; State socialism; a different society based on mutual aid. The online daily Milano Finanza of 6th May bore the headline: Why the capitalist system is practically dead. The thesis – wrong but indicative – supported by the head of an important investment fund is that in a system where companies cannot make profits without the State's intervention is no longer a capitalist system. But the main point was the conclusion: if certain changes are not directed from above, quite others will be imposed from below. Who would have said so, even just a few months ago? The problem is that at the moment the initiative is almost entirely in the hands of States and technocrats, which puts us nearer to the first of the three solutions and further from the last one, the only one that can guarantee the survival of the ecosystem and the freedom of individuals at the same time.

unbearable as they are being dismissed by the State's optimism ("Everything will be fine. I'm **staying at home**"). **Moreover, if the importance of sun exposure for vitamin D absorption is "fake news", why do the protocols handed out to carabinieri and police recommend at least half an hour in the sun a day, and where this isn't possible, taking vitamin D supplements?**

They can be sacrificed

Two coronavirus cases were reported among the warehouse workers of BRT [a logistics company] in Rovereto (one of them is in intensive care). The logistics company, after having hurriedly "sanitised" the offices (not the warehouse), wanted workers to carry on working tranquilly, without even having swab tests. The workers refused and went off sick. Meanwhile the Confindustria [Italian employers' federation] is pushing for factories to be reopened as soon as possible (they were shut after the wave of strikes that forced the government to block "non-essential production"). Someone is talking about "imbalanced subdivision of risk". Others, looking at the entire planet and its gigantic injustices, are talking about "differentiated apocalypse".

We'll talk about it, and for a long time to come

According to official data, from 2009 to today 37 billion euros have been taken from the Health System. Perhaps it's because of the eloquence of this figure that local newspapers reported a writing that appeared outside the hospital in Rovereto ("Thank you to health workers, but we're not forgetting those who cut the Health System") without the usual string of criminalizing comments? Besides the quantitative fact, there is a qualitative one. If we widen the time span, we'll see that the Health System was not only cut but also transformed. In fact, up until 1978 there was a relation of exchange between preventive medicine and "Citizens' committees" (a definition with which they tried to institutionalize the numerous people's health committees in local areas and workplaces that sprang up everywhere during the struggles in the Seventies). A few years earlier, the most serious and in-depth inquiry into the Icmea environmental disaster in

Seveso resulted from the encounter between doctors and popular committees. Given that what we are living is a mass experience which won't go away fast – the greatest limitation of freedom in the history of Italy – it will be of paramount importance for the future to create spaces of discussion between people and critical health workers so as to analyse, as a whole and in detail, what caused the epidemic and how governments and the State's scientists tackled it.

“I wish you a fantastic future”

These words end a letter in which IT expert Thomas Frey explains to a scientific divulgator that, thanks to 5G, passwords will soon be replaced with «vocal phrases accompanied by laser spectrums, touch-resonance, heart beat recognition, infrared signatures» (Corriere Innovazione, 3rd April 2020). «Wherever you are – professor Derrick De Kerchove, his interlocutor, adds – you will be located and virtually reconstituted in four dimensions in a complete and continuous way as 5G can do. You will acquire and memorize all your moves as a sort of digital unconscious, profiled and distributed in databases from which decisions will emerge (choices, purchases, votes, etc.)». «But it's not the end of the world – the professor assures us – only that of our illusory and pleasant autonomy». «This emergency has provided the push which was needed to spread digitalization». In other words, «never waste a crisis». For those who rebel against this fantastic future of machine-men, a definition is ready “talebans of the physics experience”.

English advice

A number of 5G mobile phone pylons were set on fire in Sparkhill, Birmingham, on Thursday 2nd April, and in Melling, Merseyside, on Friday 3rd April. The news was also given in Italy. The authors of the sabotage were called “conspirators”, complete with a communique by Google and Facebook, according to which the new 5G infrastructure, which is fundamental for the surveillance they exercise in the web, extends to behaviours in real life and city environments themselves. There's no conspiracy here. It is the logic of accumulation itself that makes it possible that the best way to predict consumers' behaviours –

meet only relatives have? Perhaps family relations protect us from the possibility of infection? Is there some sort of herd immunity linked to surnames? The answer seems obvious to us.

In the coming days many businesses will reopen (apart from those, certainly non-essential ones, which never closed down, such as weapons production); we'll be back to producing and consuming at full capacity. But we won't be back to our meaningful social relationships, friendships, complicities: on paper, these are worth less than a family certificate. Never mind those who don't have families or have no relatives around them because they found affection, understanding, reciprocity elsewhere.

Work, homeland, family: this is the essential!

But if we want to put an end to the social organization that creates pandemics, we must also claim in a loud voice the importance of all our relations, particularly the most disinterested and authentic ones – which often have nothing to do with families.

Similarities

To capture the whole expression of human life through the Law is a totalitarian utopia. Totalitarian because its realization would make human beings similar to machines; utopia because the State will never be able to control everything we do. It can get near to it, very near, by exploiting propitious occasions. What makes the Decrees issued in the name of the Coronavirus emergency special compared to the endless freedom-destroying laws that have marked the history of this country? Not only and not so much the mass extension of restrictions as the fact that – by upturning the foundations of the liberal ideology – these Decrees define as permitted not what is not expressly prohibited, but what is expressly allowed. Well, what is the only place where activities are divided between those expressly allowed and those expressly prohibited? Prison.

Once again warehouse workers – mainly immigrants — proved to be the most combative sector of the working class. Riders in Turin and transport cleaners in Naples, who blocked the underground service on 30th May, also went on strike.

In the belly of the beast

As the Italian media were only reporting on the protests staged by Trump’s supporters, who want to restart economic activity with no ifs or buts (the same stance taken by the League and backed by fascists, who tried to disguise themselves behind “tricolour face masks), on 1st May there were massive strikes against giants such Amazon, Whole Food, Walmart, Target in the United States. The demands are the closure of sites where infections were reported, no restriction of tests for suspected cases of contagion, retribution for dangerous jobs, suspension of deliveries of non-essential goods and an end to retaliation against workers who demand more safety at work. Nurses took to the streets outside 130 hospitals in 13 States for the recruitment of more staff, against the lack of protection equipment, and against the attempts to silence those who protest. The common denominator of these and many other demonstrations was opposition to stars-and-stripes military expenditure and interventions. Since March at least 140 wild strikes were reported all over the United States. In the meantime rent strikes spread in California, the State of New York, Missouri and several big cities.

“Relatives”

Questioning the practical purpose of the rules imposed on us for over a month for the containment of infection has revealed itself to be an exercise in critical thinking up till now. From 4th May, the beginning of the notorious “phase 2”, the restrictions on our freedom (above all assembling and demonstrating) won’t change, but it will be possible to go and visit... who? In a first draft it was relatives. Protests. You got it wrong, we meant established relations. This coming-and-going reveals yet again that certain measures have very little to do with health. What practical utility for the containment of infection does permission to

and to sell forecasts to advertisers and enterprises – is to programme them.

Good wishes from Greece

It is always wise to listen to a next-door neighbour who has just gone through a condition that could soon be yours. A collective in Athens write: «They are talking and we are talking about war. And it’s true. From price increases to the black market. From empty supermarket shelves to food stockpiling. From the “recruiting” of fewer employees to reduce employers’ losses to the dismissal of others. From coerced work without elementary sanitary prevention, to emergency overtime. From insufficient hospital beds and medical equipment and inadequate nursing staff, to the transformation of hospitals into wards full of “war wounded”. [...] Therefore “war economy” means a new cycle of memoranda, layoffs, reductions in salaries, pensions and social expenditure and privatisations. What the State is giving today to prevent its bankruptcy, we’ll pay for tomorrow with our blood».

News from the State of Emergency issue 5 – Mural paper from Trentino

April 2020

What a discovery is society!

Faced with the risk of dying of contagion, millions of human beings are discovering that their own and others’ actions have a real effect on society, i.e. on themselves and their fellow beings. After decades of liberal ideology according to which “society” was a sort of dark hole into which anything could be thrown, now the principle of responsibility is being rediscovered all of a sudden. It’s been discovered that workers are cannon fodder; that profit comes before health; that behind the

famous “public interest”, it is the State that makes the decisions along with its police. Given that viruses have effects even if they can’t be seen, we are discovering a “materiality of the invisible”. Digital technologies – to which scientists and governments are entrusting our fate – are anything but immaterial. In order for millions of people to be connected while they are shut at home, you need servers, energy, cables, antennas and above all rare metal and soils, whose looting means wars, plunder of the Earth’s crust, nuclear radiations, semi-slaves (often children) forced to work in mines, entire areas of the world transformed into landfills, i.e. conditions for new epidemics. Can a principle of responsibility exist by command, in the empire of fear?

What does “you can’t go out” mean?

Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of this period is precisely the State’s attempt to make responsibility coincide with obedience. If we think of the tragedies that obedience caused in the Twentieth century (not by chance, «I was just obeying orders» was the phrase most repeated by the Nazis in Nuremberg), such an imposition should make us tremble. Why, then, do we stay at home? Out of a sense of responsibility? Because the government says so? For fear of being fined? Millions of people would certainly answer in very different ways. What is ethically and socially unacceptable is to confuse obedience with responsibility. Let’s give an example. If we were to read the government’s regulations carefully – without letting ourselves be terrorized by the announcements from loudspeakers – and follow them to the letter, what would happen? If thousands of people were to go out at the same time to “exercise near their homes”, what would happen? If instead the same people went for a walk in isolated areas, indeed breaching the regulations, would they be putting anyone’s health at risk? The sanction was never an issue.

Obligation and prohibition

While in some “Not democratic countries” normality has become that of tracking all data on identity, frequented places, encounters, in the

News from the state of emergency (issue 7)

4th May 2020

1st May in Rovereto

On 1st May about twenty comrades took to the streets for about an hour in the Fucine working-class neighbourhood with amplified talks around the Itea blocks of flats (Istituto Trentino Edilizia Agevolata, [social housing agency of the Trentino province]. As already happened on 25th April in Brione, it was a chance to talk about the structural causes of the epidemic – all to be linked to the capitalist world of plundering and exploiting nature – and the way Confindustria [bosses’ federation] and the government tackled it, resulting in a true massacre. During the initiative we again encouraged Itea residents in economic difficulty (the managers of this provincial agency announced a rent freeze for shoppers but not for tenants) to self-organize to stop paying rent. We pointed out that the ban – which will continue even after 4th May – against people meeting up in the open air is aimed at keeping us isolated and passive in the face of what they’re preparing for us: the loans that the government is about to request from European institutions and national creditors (banks, insurance companies, investment funds) will be repaid by increasing the exploitation of workers and the poorest groups of society, an aspect which “pro-europeans” and “sovereignists” all agree on. In order to resist this – and the introduction of 5G – it is necessary to breach social confinement responsibly. Some residents – mainly young – approached the initiative. Two police patrols, on the contrary, kept at a distance.

“If we can work, we can strike too”

With this slogan blocks and strikes in many logistics industries were organized between 30th April and 1st May. In Bologna, Casoria, the province of Naples, Turin, Campi Bisenzio, Calenzano, Modena (where protests had already started at the beginning of the week). And then Genoa, Milan, Brescia, Bergamo, Piacenza, Florence, Rome, Caserta...

whims masked as needs. Nothing will ever be as it was before. It's up to us to make it sure it will be better.

“I was just obeying orders”

After the days of anger that exploded with revolts in many prisons in March, the orders given by the Ministry can be summed up as follows: «Don't let anything move in the jails». As those infected (and dead) are increasing among both screws and prisoners, how do we think that certain orders are carried out? Humiliation, denuded beaten bodies. In the prison of Caserta, even shaved beards and heads. During a risky phone call a prisoner said: «From “detained” we have become “prisoners”, and there's a big difference».

There will be those who are indignant about so-called violated “human rights”, but the truth is far more bitter. In prison structures, violence is what keeps the balance because it is the nature of power. When (and if) the “rotten apples” are fished out of the prison police, this must resound as the lie it has always been, because this is a systematic war operation (and hundreds of masked police storming a unit to massacre at random can give us an idea of this). And they will sadly be “right” when they say they were just obeying orders when they are betrayed by their superiors. Because prison, by its very nature, is an endless state of exception, where any order “from above” can turn into the nightmare of death. Let's think about that the next time they tell us that the prison guard's job is just a “job like any other”.

“Liberal west” too they are considering the guidelines for the 4.0 restructuring of social life. In various areas in China (where contagion cases are almost zero), you can't access any public place without a smartphone in your hand that “guarantees” your status. Not possessing certain instruments is beginning to look like being clandestine or suspicious at the very least. In order to get an idea, it is sufficient to see who the 17 experts chosen by Conte's government to plan “Phase 2” (i.e. «rethinking the organization of our lives and prepare a gradual return to normality») are. At the head of the task force (complete with references to the inter-ministerial committee of 1945), there will be the former CEO of Vodafone, Vittorio Colao, who will be backed up by many technicians and experts including Roberto Cingolani, the current responsible for technological innovation at Leonardo (the biggest Italian arms producer) and director of the Italian Institute of Technology. Meantime 5G is becoming a reality. «Any technology carries obligations and prohibitions with it», Günther Anders wrote. And what can be more secret and invisible than a technology that is confused with daily life itself?

We are still in time

Announcements and programs are accumulating to transform “social distancing” into something semi-permanent (given that pandemics are already integrated as “side effects” of techno-industrial production). In this way, not only will we be distanced from our fellow beings, but also from the individual and collective possibility of defending ourselves from the administrators of coercion. If we can't meet and organize ourselves, how can we react to increasingly totalitarian surveillance measures or, more banally, to layoffs? If we rely on a technological-bureaucratic apparatus in relation to the “contagion problem”, the most effective solution – the only one that doesn't put the apparatus itself in question – is total control. Not because techno-bureaucrats are evil or because they are part of who knows what global conspiracy, but because technical solutions need to disregard ethical-social considerations, structurally speaking. And even more so in the name of an emergency. Freedom, precisely because it is unpredictable, constitutes a factor of disturbance for algorithms; the value judgement

is always human, too human, while calculation presents itself as objective. What is the most effective solution when a child makes too much noise? To tie him/her up or administer them psychotropic drugs. If parents don't do so, it is not because they think it is ineffective (cost-benefit calculation), but because they think it is wrong (ethical-pedagogical judgement). Make no mistake: not falling ill will never be a certitude. The question, which no artificial intelligence can answer for us, is always the same: what are we prepared to renounce in life in order to be able to keep on living?

They thought that calling them “heroes”...

While health workers in Piacenza have declared they are prepared to go on strike if factories are reopened, two hundred Greek doctors and nurses have signed a document making seven demands to the Health Ministry's "Committee of experts". Here are some of them: «What sort of scientific approach imposes the circulation of our citizens with gloves and masks in the open air and on the contrary treats with irony and “it doesn't matter” the issue of the absolute necessity from a hygienic and social point of view, of guaranteeing every kind of personal protection for hospital and clinic staff?»; «what sort of scientific approach imposes the prohibition of more than two people of meeting in the open air, but DOES NOT denounce the functioning of firms and industries that produce non-essential items with dozens of workers amassed in closed spaces without the necessary protection equipment?». Recruitment of more health workers; provision of protection equipment to all operators; immediate and unconditional requisition of normal and intensive care beds, lab and clinical instruments from the private health care sector: with these demands gatherings were organized outside 25 hospitals in 20 provinces in Greece. Workers from many other sectors, pensioners and students took part in the initiatives. During one of the gatherings, the police intervention was pushed away in a collective form of solidarity. Among the slogans: «we are the slaves of our conscience alone» and «prohibition of movement won't stop the struggle».

Well said

«While industrial production is ruining what is left of the forests, wild food production is going even deeper, hunting for delicacies when not actually looting wild nature's last strongholds. And that's how the most exotic of pathogens, in this case Sars-2 hosted by bats, ends up on a lorry – on the prey or the workers, it doesn't make much difference – and travels like a bullet from one extremity to the other of an extended urban circuit before bursting onto the global scene». In this way a group of US epidemiologists sum up the anything but mysterious causes of the ongoing epidemic. As they aren't State experts, they don't isolate the “enemy virus” from the material conditions of our lives. So what they say will never be heard on TV: «The agro-industry is at war with public health. And public health is losing». The most meaningful question ensues: «Can we carry on simply touching up the modalities with which we have taken over nature and hope for anything better than a truce with these infections?».

Going crazy with numbers

+ 20% C.A.

+ 18% P.S.

+ 20.2 % UHT

These are quarantine percentages, but they are not those that are being thrown at us by all the channels every day. They concern the purchase and consumption of ANIMAL PRESERVES, FROZEN FISH AND LONG LIFE MILK. It cannot be denied that the situation we are experiencing was favoured by intensive animal breeding and the consequent deforestation carried out to produce feed for animals destined to become meat for slaughter. We need to look at the way we see the world and relate to nature, put our ideas in question, stop seeing animals as objects destined to satisfy our

considerable number of police turned up and tried to identify those present. The cops' attempt didn't go well and the group left, chanting and greeting the people watching from their balconies. Greetings to the prisoners of Spini di Gardolo later in the day.

From what we have read and heard, several banners and posters appeared in Rovereto in remembrance of partisans, against fascists and capital, in solidarity with the prisoners in struggle, against the logic of the bosses and the State that wants factories open and people shut at home... Several parks were "freed" of partition tape, and prohibition notices were replaced with others inviting people to use spaces collectively, keeping a distance. In Tierno, music in the piazza with neighbours bringing along homemade pizzas. In Mori, tour of the town with music and posters. In Noriglio, unfurling of banners, tour of the town with partisan songs and reading out leaflet; in Lizzanella, presence in the piazza with banners and music; in Fucine, posters and amplified speeches; in Brione, a group of comrades – wearing masks and keeping a distance from one another – went through part of the neighbourhood with a banner ("Self-organize to put an end to submission") and a sound system. The first stop outside a block of flats attracted the interest of many people on balconies, who responded with a hearty round of applause; about a dozen people joined in the initiative. Among the many talks (on the structural causes of the epidemic, Confindustria [General Confederation of Italian Industry, a bosses' federation] and the government's responsibilities, against technological control in the name of health...), an invitation was launched to those with economic difficulties to self-organize and stop paying rent to Itea [social housing agency of the Trentino province] (whose directors had announced a rent freeze for shopkeepers but not for tenants). Perhaps due to unannounced appointments and different times, the comrades were already leaving when the police and Digos patrols turned up. Late in the evening, fireworks at three points in the suburbs of Rovereto.

Resisting the emergency, challenging the prohibitions

31st March, Milan. Picket of workers (those who are not yet ill) of the Fruttital warehouse, who risk losing their jobs. In the full swing of the emergency, the firm had announced its **closure and relocation**. Moreover, in the previous days workers hadn't been given any protection against the contagion.

1st April, Calliano (Trento). Some prisoners' relatives had called for this day's bar-beating to resound outside jails. So, in order to explain the meaning of the bar-beating that was going to happen in the evening, a small group of anarchists thought of inverting the institutional practice of spreading sinister warnings and announcements from loudspeakers by going around the town with a sound system and talking in support of the struggle inside the prison. Within a short time, carabinieri patrols, plus vehicles of the local police and Digos, arrive on the spot.

8th April, Turin. "Food delivery" is considered an essential activity but repair shops are shut; firms such as Glovo and Deliveroo have never taken care of the maintenance of the bikes used by delivery staff: riders gather in a piazza with bicycles and tools for an "itinerant workshop" so that those still working despite the lockdown can repair their bikes.

14th April, Rome. Revolt in the Refugee Centre in the Torre Maura area. Operators prohibit people from leaving the centre, those locked-up respond with fires and damage. In the previous days there had been protests, self-harm, fires, escape attempts, hunger and thirst strikes in several Repatriation Centres.

15th April Carmagnola (Turin). Picket of health workers in a care home where 46 cases of contagion (out of 50 residents) were reported. The demand: face masks and swabs for all staff. The response: police and carabinieri turn out, the cooperative Socialcoop declares they have "proceeded with recruitments to cover personnel absence"... infected personnel.

15th April, Turin. Itinerant sellers of the Porta Palazzo market take to the streets (maintaining social distancing); the market is the only one in the city not to have reopened, perhaps because it is situated in an area under intense “redevelopment” (more and more investments for the rich, less and less space for the poor).

16th April, Massalengo (Lodi). 250 workers in the central warehouse of Carrefour Lombardia go on strike against a subcontract with a cooperative that would pay workers 20% less. An agreement cancelling the subcontract is signed. Meantime news comes of the closure of Fruittal in Milan and its relocation to Verona. As Fruittal is one of Carrefour’s suppliers, the workers decide that its lorries won’t be unloaded as a form of solidarity with the workers being sacked.

16th April. Prisoners’ relatives and people in solidarity protest outside jails in several cities (Rome, Bologna, Turin, Bolzano...). In Rome police surround them and push them, not giving a shit about the much-invoked safe distancing, and take 8 people to the police station. Previously, relatives had protested outside the jails of Secondigliano, Poggioreale, Santa Maria Capua Vetere. In the prisons of Ariano Irpino, Palermo, Crotona, Bologna, Alessandria, Santa Maria C.V., Rebibbia, Secondigliano there have been revolts, bar-beating, hunger and thirst strikes.

17th April, Torrazza Piemonte (Turin). All the staff in the local Amazon warehouse go on strike: the company hasn’t provided any information on contagion cases in the premises, hiding behind the screen of “privacy protection”.

25th April

While the government and regions are reopening the places of production and trade, prohibition against going out into the open air will last at least until May. This obvious discrepancy doesn’t correspond to any “scientific evidence” (unless to confirm what a philosopher wrote more than thirty years ago, i.e. that the State has «cut the gigantic tree of science to make a truncheon out of it»). On the one hand it is necessary

to produce and consume; on the other, before people can get out, [the authorities] want to have planned how to control them. There. We need to be ahead of them, if we don’t want to suffer not only the “health crisis” but also the economic reorganization that will follow. And what more evocative day than 25th April? We are launching a **call to break** the restrictions. While following the principle of protecting our own and others’ health. And each according to their availability. It is not just a question of affirming responsibility against disobedience, but of saying loud and clear that we don’t accept the division between those who can be sacrificed and those who can be saved; that our lives are not “data to be extracted and analysed”; that there can be no health without relations of mutual aid with others and the nature on which we depend.

We don’t want “to live with pandemics”, but put an end to the social organization that creates them.

News from the State of Emergency issue 6 – Mural paper from Trentino

25th April: signals of mutiny

The appeal to breach confinement regulations on the April the 25th was taken up in quite diversified and creative ways. In Trento, a group of comrades came out into the streets in the San Pio X neighbourhood, keeping safe distancing and showing that it is possible to meet in the streets, in the open air, while protecting one and others’ health. The group – with a banner “Responsible, not obedient. Resistance now and always” – stayed up in the street for a good half hour, with speeches, music and chants; some came in solidarity and a number of local residents joined in, then a