

# Capitalism stripped naked, Covid-19 in Mexico and beyond

Thursday 16 April 2020, by [LUND Andrés](#) (Date first published: 3 April 2020).

**As of April 11, Mexico has 3,844 confirmed coronavirus infections and 233 Covid-19 deaths. The real figures are likely many times higher. Left-of-center populist President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was slow to react to the pandemic [1] and his government's economic response is far short of what is needed to protect millions of Mexican workers now losing their jobs. The government's stimulus package measures just \$13.5 billion out of a \$1.15 trillion GDP. López Obrador himself risks being left behind by reality, claiming just last week in a televised address that "This crisis is temporary, transitory. Normality will return soon." [2] Meanwhile drug violence is thriving [3] and will complicate public health measures.**

Andrés Lund is a veteran ecosocialist activist and writer in Mexico and a member of the *Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT)*. This essay, which was originally published on the PRT's website [4], explores the capitalist compulsion to value profit over human life and nature. It was translated and published here as part of No Borders News ongoing international coronavirus coverage.

1. Human beings, we should remember in these dark times, are material, natural, living beings, intertwined with and dependent on nature. For these reasons, we are finite beings, mortal. We have only a short life and limited means by which to survive. We are also fragile beings, almost anything affects our bodies and even tiny viruses can diminish us, make us sick, or even kill us. Furthermore, we are constantly exposed to contingencies, permanently threatened by chaos that portends death and destruction. Such is the human condition and techno-scientific dreams that seek to alter or eliminate our finiteness are no more than that, dreams.

2. Human beings are also social beings, inter- and eco-dependent. We create social relations, use values, institutions, and living communities in which we attempt to hold back the cosmos, to ensure existence (human and other) and protect us from an impending chaos before which all things are fleeting.

3. Capitalism, as is now understood, is not some cosmic defender of life, but rather a particular form of chaos that threatens all forms of life. It is incapable of caring for life because, as Marx asserted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Capital represents the alienated power (it stands outside social control) of dead Things (merchandise, money, machines, markets) over and above the living. Capital compels living labor (the power that itself propels production and the reproduction of life) to submit to its own productivist and consumer logic, a logic that seeks only to realize value and increase profits, to maximize its own benefit and minimize costs. Capital exploits humans and nature without limits.

4. Today, we will surpass one million coronavirus infections internationally. As the the pandemic accelerates and politicians face the dilemma of choosing between taking care of the economy and taking care of the working population, the capitalist system - which Marx argued functions as an

“automatic subject” - has already opted to save the economy. The powers that be aim to conceal this disaster as a financial crisis triggered by the coronavirus which they content, in the end, is a typical economic crisis what will purge weak financial, manufacturing, and commercial actors only to then jump start a new cycle of economic growth where only the strongest Capitals (and capitalists) will prevail.

5. The same criteria is being applied to the pandemic: take shelter and wait for it to pass. Those with enough resources will be able to isolate themselves and survive, while those without, those who are more fragile, will not. Donald Trump, one of the most cynical personifications of Capital has stated this openly, not merely as his own opinion but as the official policy of what is supposed to be the most powerful capitalist country in the world, a power woefully in need of a public health system.

6. When choosing between protecting the population and the economy, Trump defends the economy. Shamelessly, Trump has said the pandemic could kill 100,000 to 200,000 Americans - he hopes it will only kill 100,000! In what is a false dichotomy between choosing the economy (production, distribution, consumption) or human life, Trump and many other lamentable politicians who personify the power of Capital have chosen to protect the economy, an economy alienated from the humans who produce it, an economy at the service of Capital.

7. Faced with this false dilemma, we must opt for a humane and anti-capitalist solution: to choose life and the economy, that is, to put the production, distribution, and consumption of goods at the service of life instead of Capital. This means dedicating all our efforts towards the production of basic goods people need to face the pandemic (hospitals, beds, medical equipment, medicines, health care workers) while simultaneously confronting the economic crisis by providing wages, jobs, food, and basic services for all. We must distribute necessities without regard to profit, publicly and free of charge, guaranteeing that goods and services reach everyone on an equal basis, regardless of social status, gender, race, and nationality.

8. Why is it so hard to imagine such a response, even as we face this terrible crisis, a crisis where hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of lives are at risk? Because, as Marx explained, we live in an upside-down world, where the economy does not work to benefit human health and life, it works for Capital. That is why Marx spoke of the need for a revolution to overcome capitalism, to turn the world right-side up, to put the economy (and politics, culture, and all human activities) at the service of life. Yet far from these socialist priorities, anyone who looks carefully at what is happening during these terrible days will see only the grotesque spectacle capitalism stripped naked.

**Andrés Lund**

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**P.S.**

• NO BORDERS ON APRIL 11, 2020:

<https://nobordersnews.org/2020/04/11/andres-lund-capitalism-stripped-naked-covid-19-in-mexico-and-beyond/>

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**Footnotes**

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/30/andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-el-chapo-moth>

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[2] <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-economy/mexican-president-pitches-frugal-economic-plan-against-coronavirus-idUSKBN21N0VA>

[3] <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/public-health/2020/04/09/drug-crime-is-thriving-in-mexico-and-many-fear-coronavirus-will-make-it-worse/>

[4] <https://www.prtmexico.org/post/el-capitalismo-va-desnudo>