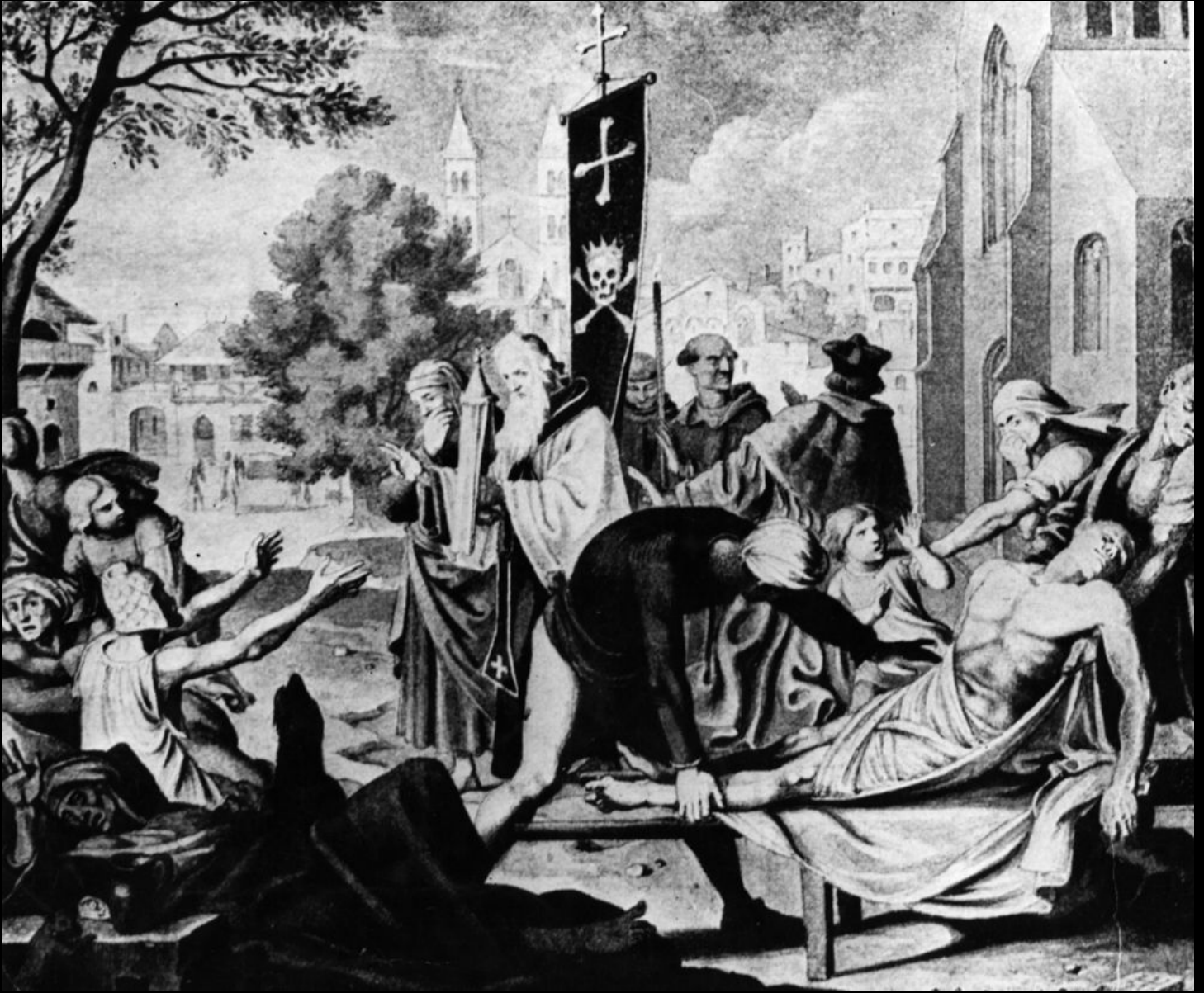


NEVERMORE!

VOLUME 1. MARCH 2021



AN ANARCHIST JOURNAL OF
HERESY AND THOUGHTCRIME



Introduction

The monstrous Black Volcano which has loomed and leered menacingly over Happy City since it was founded has finally erupted.

Vast rivers of lava are streaming down the mountain slopes towards the human settlement and ash is already beginning to rain on the rooftops. It is only a matter of time before a pyroclastic cloud scorches instant death onto the people or the molten rock pours into the narrow streets and kills everyone.

But in the city there is complete calm. Reassured by the King's insistence that they are in no danger and that the volcano is not actually erupting at all, the city folk are going about their everyday lives. Goods are bought and sold, meals prepared and eaten, couples married and children educated.

There was a brief moment of confusion when it was discovered that the Happy City authorities had cut down every single tree in the Great Gardens in order to build a massive wooden fence on the northern limits.

But rumours that this was designed to hide from view the erupting Black Volcano were soon dismissed as malicious paranoid fantasies, as the King explained that it was a completely necessary step to protect his people from blood-thirsty foreign pirates and smugglers.

And so, as certain extinction draws ever closer, the people of the Happy City keep bustling around, making money, gossiping, squabbling over the petty details of their lives and reporting to the Official Inquisitor any citizen seen to be sniffing suspiciously at the sulphur-laden air, cocking an alert ear to the distant rumbling or trying to peer through the gaps in the Great Anti-Crime Fence in order to see if the lava is close.

Welcome to Dystopia 2021.

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Welcome to Nevermore!

It has now been more than one year since the world that we have known all of our lives came screeching to a halt. And what a year's it's been. The collective unconscious roils in the throes of a bad acid trip, the realization seeps slow in the mind that the crisis is here to stay, and we are all along for the ride, tossed about by uncontrollable forces like a ship in a storm, trying to maintain some grace amidst all the fear and the confusion and the doubt.

Amidst it all, we have struggled to find solid ground. How are we to organize in the midst of a global pandemic? What is even going on? What threats should we be preparing for? How can we make sure that our loved ones are safe? What do other people think is going on?

This piece is meant to kickstart discussion around the anarchist response to COVID-19. There has been a taboo on criticizing the authoritarian measures that the state has taken over the course of the last year. We see too many anarchists are setting aside their core beliefs in the face of the current crisis. Worse, some are twisting and contorting those ways that are antithetical to the principles that anarchism is based upon. Many seem to be conforming to the state-sanctioned groupthink, convincing themselves that doing so is some grand act of solidarity with the most vulnerable people in our societies.

We write this today to call all true anarchists home, to the warmth of the fire of freedom that burns in the heart of our tradition. It is for the sake of freedom that we fight, for within us dwells a desire to be free. For each of us to be a sovereign unto ourselves; to determine with the free will which Spirit vested in us what our lives shall be.

That is why we write today. To reach out to our comrades to call for a serious effort in political reorientation. The old world is behind us, and we do not know how to relate to the new one into which we have been thrust. There is no shame in this. Things have changed extremely quickly, in ways that none of us were expecting. There are many factors that have contributed to a sense of complacency. But now the time has come to look at ourselves in the mirror, and ask ourselves: What have we become?

We have watched over the proceeding year, meekly, quietly, as other anarchists have toed the lines drawn by state bureaucrats. We have remained silent whilst witnessing acts of hostility towards those who have refused to comply with state mandates. No longer. Nevermore.

The impetus for this behaviour amongst anarchists seems to be rooted in their desire to do well by those in

need, and as this particular crisis is being caused by a virus, that seems to unfold as an enthusiastic willingness to accept state mandates and to shame those who would violate them.

It is admirable to want to do well by the elderly and infirm, but is genuine concern for the elderly really what's motivating people? We don't think so. If it was, there would be a much greater degree of collective soul-searching about how our society treats the elderly. If the government was genuinely interested in improving the quality of life of old people, it would be investing in fixing long term care. Of course genuine concern is part of the mix, but many people are also acting out of selfish fear, be it fear of getting sick themselves, fear of getting others sick, or fear of the disapproval for others.

No wonder anxiety is at an all time high. When so many social norms are turned upside-down, people are at a loss of what to do, how to carry themselves. And so, in such times, when we don't know how to act, we look around to see what others are doing. If others are doing it, it must be safe to do. If it's safe to do, it must be right to do. And so a new conformity begins. No hugging. No shaking hands.

All this happens subconsciously, and is not a function of ideology. It is normal human adaptive behaviour. If you were to travel to a foreign land, you would do likewise, absorbing the social cues of the land's inhabitants. Across different cultures, it is respectful for a guest to observe the customs of the locals. Now we all live in a strange land, and we are seeking to adapt ourselves to its strange customs.

The difference is that this strange new world is not familiar to anyone. There are none more qualified to interpret it than we are. The time has come to weave this all into a story, to imbue what is happening with meaning that can guide us towards wise action. We need to cast a new spell.

The good news that courage and inspiration are as contagious as fear and depression. It is imperative that we search within ourselves for the courage to do what we must do to ensure our survival in an increasingly tumultuous world. Perhaps some of you are in denial about this, but the old world ain't coming back. The other crises facing the world didn't go away when COVID hit. We are still staring down an ecological crisis of epic proportions, not to mention an economic crisis, the possibility of war, etc... We hate to be the bearers of bad news, but the likeliest scenario for the next ten years is of one crisis flowing into the next, or, if you prefer, one continual crisis. The ominous phrase "Winter is Coming" has proven to be true. And we're one year deep.

Our dignity in quarantine

A report from anarchists in Greece

It all happened without anyone really realizing it. And now we find ourselves locked up in our houses, waiting for next day's news which we all know will contain more and more restrictions. Society is in crisis, they say, because of a virus spreading. The government is pressing that it is of most importance that we all do exactly what it says, and that by this we take our responsibility and act in solidarity. It stresses that the state of emergency is of course temporary, but necessary to win the war against what is seriously threatening our well being... But wait a minute...

Which virus? Actually, we cannot know. All the information, numbers and statistics that are at the base of the imposed confinement are in the hands of the government and the specialists that work for them. It is not a matter of denying the actual existence of a virus going around, but to realize that the knowledge of its characteristics, how it spreads, how it can be tackled, but also the data concerning its impact, is in the hands of scientists around the globe, who often don't agree even among themselves about how to interpret them or what practical conclusions they would entail. The conclusion of the authorities on the other hand is simple; they know, we don't.

And because of this we owe them complete obedience. The mass media is playing its classic role of servant of the system magnificently. Deciding what exists by only showing and endlessly repeating the story by the authorities, not giving a millimetre of space to deviant voices of any kind. Their job consists of fully preparing the grounds for the next even more totalitarian decisions. And isn't a virus the

perfect enemy? Invisible and possibly everywhere, with everyone not complying to whatever rule is invented becoming an accomplice of that enemy. Justified to be oppressed with fines and prison sentences. A perfect context is created in which the state can shine as the ultimate saviour.

Which responsibility?

And so we cannot open a newspaper or put on television without being told we should 'take responsibility'. But what does this mean then? They are asking us to blindly follow the orders of some politicians. But aren't they the same bureaucrats we were distrusting before? Didn't they prove so many times to be greedy and corrupt because they are driven much more by personal interest than by care for others? Didn't it show again and again that their hunger for power is bigger than any sense of justice or reason?

These are the kind of people that are asking us to trust them, no questions asked, and call it 'taking responsibility'. Would we not be doing the opposite then? What we are really asked to do is to give up any conscience, critical thought, and autonomy, to welcome extreme government control in every aspect of our lives.

The misleading spectacle continues. We should obey the extreme measures being taken out of a sense of 'solidarity'. Isn't it cynical to hear these words from the mouths of the representatives of a system that is based on the exact opposite of solidarity? The whole year through we should run around like chicken without heads to keep up with the constant game of

competition, to be exploited, to be hunted by cops for whatever reason they feel like that day, and be robbed by statesmen which made their profession out of it, and now they come to us and dare to speak about solidarity?

They dare to act as if they care about our well-being? What about the millions of people living in poverty so people like those in the government can be rich? What about all the people dying at their crappy jobs feeding the relentless economical machine? What about those being tortured in the police stations by the uniformed executioners of the state? What about the thousands of migrants dying at the borders every year? Where is the government with its big speeches about solidarity then?

While they are trying to feed us their hypocritical tales about solidarity, we see that the lockdown is locking loads of people up in unbearable circumstances. Children in their homes under the uninterrupted rule of violent parents for example. Or partners, husbands and wives stuck in abusive relationships. Thousands of migrants being trapped in camps, in even worse conditions than usual. In prisons all visits are stopped, as is all access of prisoners to material, food and clothes coming from the outside. Empty spaces in prisons are being used to isolate prisoners with symptoms of the corona-virus, these spaces being empty in most cases because they are not fit to host prisoners.

One can only imagine the effect this will have on the health of the prisoners being dumped there. In the prisons in Italy massive revolts broke out after general restrictions

on all levels were introduced. Probably the only way for the prisoners to save their dignity seeing the conditions they are forced in. Also in Spain and France prisoners are standing up and fighting back, as are other prisoners around the world. The state doesn't know what solidarity means and has never been concerned about our well-being. As always, it will be up to us to take care of each other, and make sure that those that need it get support. When the government uses the word solidarity, it is only to give a feeling of guilt to those who don't obey their orders, and to push people to internalize its authority.

Which crisis?

So they tell us we are in crisis. Maybe somebody can tell us when the moment comes that we are not in crisis? From the financial crisis to the climate crisis, through the migrant crisis to the corona crisis. It seems the system has a lot of different names for what always turn out to be periods which are used to restructure its power, to enlarge and intensify its oppression. In this case – especially in this case – it will not be different. The idea of a condition of crisis has always been used to contextualize a further totalitarian evolution of power. The rhythm on which this evolution is forced is not always the same of course. The bigger and more urgent they can make the crisis look like, the bigger and faster the change can be. It goes without saying that the current 'crisis' is giving the government (all the governments) the perfect context in which to take giant steps in the development of their mechanisms of control and oppression.

Whose emergency?

It is always repeated that whatever steps that are taken are 'temporary', but this is a lie. Many occasions in the past showed us that

at least a part of the measures from 'states of emergency' were kept afterward and were embedded in laws never to be taken back. From big examples like 9/11 that changed forever the abilities of states to track, trace and record everyone, to more recent times in which terrorist attacks were used as a pretext to introduce many new ways to bring to court whoever disagrees with the state, to get the army on the streets, to boost the general collection of data, etc. And in Greece, didn't the new government launch a general state of emergency in the capital aimed at the total repression of the unwanted (homeless, anarchists, drug users, squatters etc.) since last year?

We all know they are working non-stop on creating an image of 'crisis' (in this case some kind of 'security crisis') to justify their absolute thirst for power, implying that its fascist behavior and totalitarian policies would be of 'necessary but temporary' nature... And now, what is massively happening? People turn toward the internet for their needs, for all their needs. From communicating to consuming, from working to relaxing. In the blink of an eye a big part of life has deliberately been transferred to cyberspace. By this it becomes even more easy for the state to follow, register and surveil the daily activity of whoever. But especially, it is our own will and creativity to 'solve' a lot of the problems being caused by our mass imprisonment, that help in normalizing it and finally pushing its acceptance. The management of the current situation will bring forth an unimaginable set of experiences, tools and know-how that can and will continue to be used whenever deemed necessary by those in power.

Which war?

But all objections or criticisms are undesirable or even dangerous,

because after all 'we are at war'. At war against a biological event, against nature. Isn't this indicative for these modern times? We forget more and more how to live with or in nature, but multiply and intensify our wars against it.

Our whole way of living is built on the exploitation of nature and, if this reality is not overthrown soon, its total destruction. Maybe it is the western arrogance culturally believing we are above all things, and so always extending our ways to control them.

Always looking at nature in terms of its practical value to 'civilized' society. And when we are confronted with something that causes discomfort everything will be put in place to tame it, to manipulate or eradicate it. So a constant war is being waged, against nature, against life and against death. It became an unimaginable thought that we would not own nature but be a part of it, and by this can be subjected to some of its conditions...Of course nobody wants to die, or see its loved ones die or suffer. We want to live!

But is merely surviving at a certain point the same as living? Is it possible to live in a cage, or can we at best survive in one? Are we ready to take away all risk of living to have a better chance of survival? One could say these are philosophical questions, good to pass the time but nothing to do with real life. Well, at this very moment all life is being taken away from us because we are told that this is the only way to survive. Every day in isolation is an attack on our autonomy, on our ability to think and act for ourselves, to live, love and fight.

The quarantine has to be refused, because our dignity cannot survive in. The lockdown has to be broken, because our desire for freedom will not!

How can we resist?

Humankind is facing the prospect of an unimaginably grim future and we urgently need to rise up and shout 'no!'. We cannot allow ourselves, and generations to come, to be violently forced into lives of miserable slavery, deprived of our freedom and individuality, isolated from each other, controlled and exploited for every minute of our servile existences by an all-powerful technocratic elite.

But how can we resist? Words are all very well, but what are we actually going to do to break free from this unprecedented danger?

It is useful, of course, to come together on the streets in huge numbers to voice our dissent, as this signals to others out there that they are not alone, that resistance does actually exist beyond the system's carefully manufactured consensus.

But these events need ongoing momentum, the sense they are leading somewhere fast, and the system's smear-mongers, falsifiers, detractors, infiltrators and mockers will do all they can to kill that.

So we need to do more than just protest. We can act independently and without advance notice with groups of friends. Posters, stickers, leaflets, banner drops and graffiti all communicate directly with other people and create an atmosphere of urgent revolt.

Individuals can resist on their own, even, by refusing to comply with the latest draconian restrictions, by cocking a defiant snoop at the authorities and helping to push their enforcement capacities towards breaking point.

As the repression is cranked up, and our right to dissent is further removed, people will inevitably be pushed towards sabotage of the system's infrastructures as the only way to fight back.

In all its aspects, our resistance needs to be stronger than anything that any of us have ever experienced before in our lives.

It cannot be fuelled merely by political opinion and allegiance and it cannot simply express itself in the form of occasional symbolic protest or abstract argument.

We need to source it from deep within us.

We have to give voice to our primal need to live and breathe and smile, to speak and shout and sing, to touch and hug and kiss.

We have to be governed by our much-derided gut feeling, our innate human instinct. We need to shake off worries about the consequences of speaking up and fighting back – we need to go with what we feel is right. We need to tap into the energies of solidarity, belonging and togetherness that have always played a huge role in human society but which are being deliberately destroyed by those who would control us.

Carl Jung regarded our collective unconscious as a latent force which could surge up and save humanity at the moment of our greatest need. But that force only becomes real when it is channelled and expressed by actual physical human beings!

We have to shrug off the chains of subdued conventionality and fake "rationality" with which we have been held down all our lives and allow this collective energy to flood through our blood, our limbs and our minds.

We have to all become the heroes and heroines of our myths and legends, the courageous men and women who face their destinies head-on and risk everything for the common good.

Fuelled by this timeless strength, we will suddenly find we are a thousand times more powerful than we ever imagined.



We are Heathen

The spell that we have been living under
all our lives is weakening, sister.
The world is changing
and everyone is just holding their breath

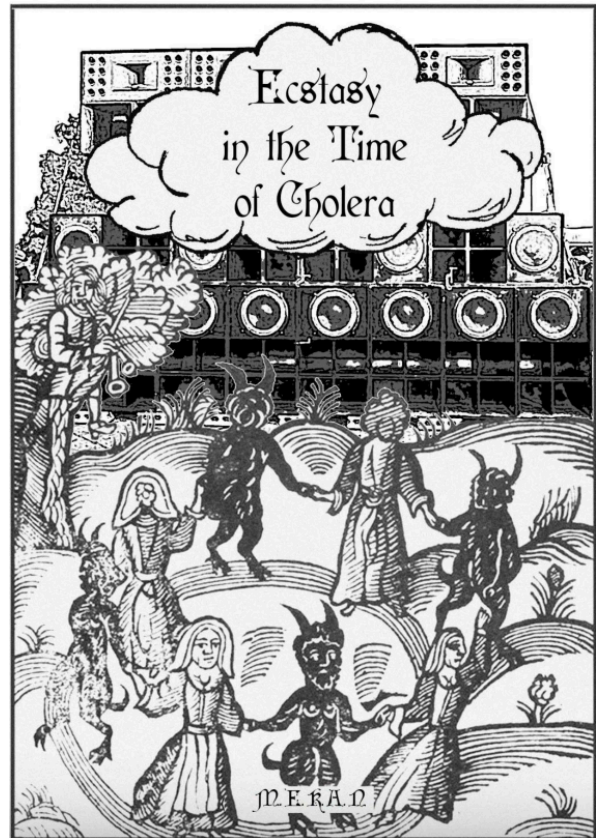
We are released into the wilderness
We wander through the primordial forest
strangers to it, strangers to ourselves.

We stalk the shadows
that stalk us
in the back alleys of a haunted city
that we used to call home

We inhale and exhale
the smoke of illusion

We put on new clothes
for new occasions and do mention the hiss
that the smoke machine makes
as we passively watch
the undulating tendrils of smoke that it sends
stretching, unstretching, swimming through the unrecognized air
hanging unchallenged until it melts into non-existence
just like the things that we do not say
the things we are not allowed to say

We do not say what we mean
and soon we may no longer know
what we mean when we try to say
what we think we know -
what used to be so clear
has become a fog
and ourselves another surface for it to settle upon,
ourselves as obscure as that which it conceals,
which is what we conceal,
which is the crime
of not believing what we are supposed to believe,
the same old guilt in a new disguise -
We are heretics, just as we have always been.
We are heathen.



If Truth is the First Casualty of War, then who are we fighting?

The world has turned upside down. It is inside out and backwards. A reversal of meaning is everywhere occurring at once, and we are sent reeling into a state of atavistic regression. Is this what it feels to live in the midst of a psychic blitzkrieg? It has been a dizzying whirlwind of a year. It's hard to know what to think these days. I find myself questioning if the political analysis that I had pre-pandemic is still relevant. Clearly, when times change, it is necessary to adapt. But how?

This publication is the result of an attempt to come to grips with the zeitgeist. We hope that this zine will serve as a catalyst for discussion and debate as to the question of how anarchists might best engage with the fucked-up changes that have so rapidly transformed the reality we live in.

We must re-affirm our core values. Anarchism is the philosophy of freedom. It is predicated upon voluntary association, mutual aid, and the belief that there is a symbiosis between the freedom of the individual and the health of the collective.

And here we must get into a question that has been gnawing away at us for months. Why have anarchists been so silent in the face of increasing state repression? Much of the world is now under a state of arbitrary rule approaching martial law. Aren't radical Leftists historically the defenders of civil liberties such as the freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press? Yet until recently, there seemed to be a taboo against criticizing measures justified in the name of Public Health.

Thankfully, that seems to be now changing. In Quebec, home to a fierce anarchist tradition, it took the imposition of a curfew before anarchists reached the point of mobilizing, but we are happy to report that radical Leftists in Montreal are now taking to the streets. There have now been two anti-curfew demonstrations organized by anarchists. Hopefully this momentum continues.

This is an encouraging sign, and we hope that it will lead to further dialogue about the path forward for a resistance movement in the age of COVID, for the old world is behind us.

In Quebec the lock-down this winter has just been too much for people to take. Everything is illegal and

everyone's on house arrest. The government appears to have suspended most rights that are supposed to be guaranteed under the constitution, acting with impunity, and there are no critical voices in the Mainstream Media.

In fact, freedom of the press appears to no longer exist. It seems that this has happened because business models of newspapers, cable news, magazines, etc. have failed, and now they're receiving subsidies from the government. This past year especially, they've gotten much less critical of anything the government does. Basically it seems like the state is setting the editorial policy for most of the mainstream media. Dissent is rare.

It is feeling a lot like a police state, and this is after just one year. If this continues, where will we be in five years? It already feels like we're sliding into totalitarianism... which might seem like hyperbole, but it seems to like the state just keeps tightening the screws. They just extended quarantine from 14 to 24 days in case of COVID variants, and they say that even after people are vaccinated, social distancing and mask mandates will remain in effect. We're not seeing any light at the end of the tunnel.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that social media platforms are scrubbing their platforms of any information deemed to be contrary to the recommendations of Public Health. This type of censorship works to create a type of groupthink by making criticism of lockdown measures seem like an extremist ideology, by placing it outside the bounds of what it is acceptable to say. The next logical step is the persecution of thoughtcrime, the imprisonment of dissidents & undesirables.

So, yes, this is a warning. We need to question authority. We need to ask ourselves: What is justifiable in the name of Public Health and what isn't? And who gets to decide?

We should also critically examine the term "Public Health"? Often, it seems that the term is used to suggest that individual wishes, needs and desires must be subordinated in the interests of a greater good. Who determines this greater good? The state, of course.

We believe that human beings want to be free. However, there is one thing that most people value over freedom, and that is safety. When a regime wishes to gain



the compliance of a population for nefarious purposes, such as war, they focus on making people afraid. This is basic. If there is one thing that people will sacrifice their freedom for, it is safety, and propagandists have known this for centuries.

As a Nazi, speaking at the Nuremberg trial, famously put it:

“The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.”

Isn't this exactly what is happening now? Everyday, we are told over and over again how dire the situation is. We are essentially being told that we are under attack. The only difference is that the enemy is not a foreign power but a force of nature, a virus, an invisible enemy.

In the place of pacifists, there are civil libertarians, those who refuse to accept the logic of Public Health. These people, often characterized as “anti-maskers” or “anti-vaxxers”, are the targets of scorn and ridicule, and their voices are silenced and ignored. They are denounced for exposing vulnerable people to danger, and the danger of their ideas is used to justify censorship. And the scorn that they are subjected to sends a message to those who might be tempted to speak up against the normalization of arbitrary measures – it's not worth the effort.

We need to reject the logic that we need to be protected from ourselves. To accept this logic is to accept defeat. If we accept the logic that the information that we have access to must be controlled, we are accepting the logic that we must be controlled. The state would have us believe that it has our best interests at heart, and that it is manipulating us for our own good, in the name of Public Health.



A red moon looms overhead

The world has gone mad again,
And as the gulf between what is thinkable
And what is sayable grows wider and wider
I wonder what the future holds in store
For those who will follow in our footsteps.

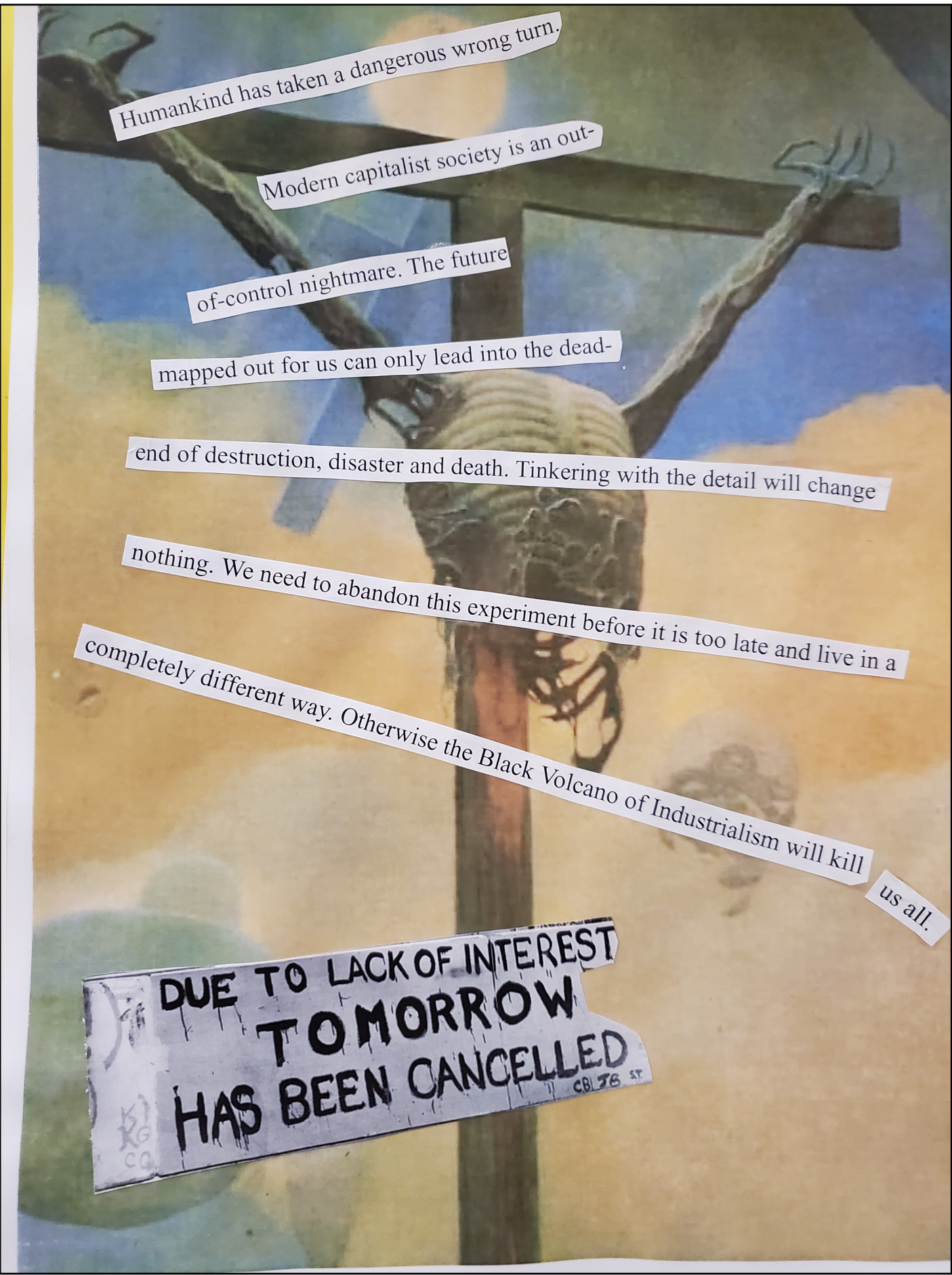
A red moon looms overhead
But her name is never to be spoken
We must dutifully ignore
The Gods of Yore.
We have no need for such superstition now
We are becoming omnipotent
We will soon be immortal
Who cares about a Moon
Who says she is a Goddess?
She clearly isn't there.
Government scientists have clearly shown
That Her Supposed Eminence
Does not exist, and most assuredly is not a
Moon

Whatever that might be.
For there is no moon
Nor have we need of one

So stay inside
And keep your eyes on the screen
And away from the sky.

We know we are being lied to
We know that the wool is being pulled over
our eyes
But what of those who will follow in our
footsteps?
Will they know?
Will they sense in their spirits that something
is wrong?
That something is missing?
That something is gone?





Humankind has taken a dangerous wrong turn.

Modern capitalist society is an out-

of-control nightmare. The future

mapped out for us can only lead into the dead-

end of destruction, disaster and death. Tinkering with the detail will change

nothing. We need to abandon this experiment before it is too late and live in a

completely different way. Otherwise the Black Volcano of Industrialism will kill
us all.

**DUE TO LACK OF INTEREST
TOMORROW
HAS BEEN CANCELLED**
CBL 76 ST

To reclaim autonomy, ask different questions

The situation changes quickly. Along with everyone else, I follow it avidly and share updates, watch our lives change from day to day, get bogged down in uncertainty. It can feel like there is only a single crisis whose facts are objective, allowing only one single path, one that involves separation, enclosure, obedience, control. The state and its appendages become the only ones legitimate to act, and the mainstream media narrative with the mass fear it produces swamps our ability for independent action.

Some anarchists have pointed out that there are two crises playing out in parallel — one is a pandemic that is spreading rapidly and causing serious harm and even death for thousands. The other is a crisis management strategy imposed by the state. The state claims to be acting in the interest of everyone's health — it wants us to see its response as objective and inevitable.

But its crisis management is also a way of determining what conditions will be like when the crisis resolves, letting it pick winners and losers along predictable lines. Recognizing the inequality baked into these supposedly neutral measures means acknowledging that certain people are being asked to pay a much higher cost than others for what the powerful are claiming as a collective good. I want to recover some autonomy and freedom of action in this moment, and to do this, we need to break free of the narrative we are given.

When we let the state control the narrative, the questions that are asked about this moment, we also let them control the answers. If we want a different outcome than the powerful are preparing, we need to be able to ask a different question.

We mistrust the mainstream narrative on so many things, and are usually mindful of the powerful's ability to shape the narrative to make the actions they want to take seem inevitable. Here in Canada, the exaggeration and lies about the impacts of #shutdowncanada rail blockades was a deliberate play to lay the groundwork for a violent return to normal. We can understand the benefits of an infection-control protocol while being critical of the ways the state is using this moment for its own ends. Even if we assess the situation ourselves and accept certain recommendations the state is also pushing, we don't have to adopt the state's project as our own. There is a big difference between following orders and thinking independently to reach similar conclusions.

When we are actually carrying out our own project, it becomes easier to make an independent assessment of the situation, parsing the torrent of information and

recommendations for ourselves and asking what is actually suitable for our goals and priorities. For instance, giving up our ability to have demonstrations while we still need to go work retail jobs seems like a bad call for any liberatory project. Or recognizing the need for a rent strike while also fear mongering about any way of talking to our neighbours.

Giving up on struggle while still accommodating the economy is very far from addressing our own goals, but it flows from the state's goal of managing the crisis to limit economic harm and prevent challenges to its legitimacy. It's not that the state set out to quash dissent, that is probably just a byproduct. But if we have a different starting point — build autonomy rather than protect the economy — we will likely strike different balances about what is appropriate.

For me, a starting point is that my project as an anarchist is to create the conditions for free and meaningful lives, not just ones that are as long as possible. I want to listen to smart advice without ceding my agency, and I want to respect the autonomy of others — rather than a moral code to enforce, our virus measures should be based on agreements and boundaries, like any other consent practice. We communicate about the measures we choose, we come to agreements, and where agreements aren't possible, we set boundaries that are self-enforceable and don't rely on coercion. We look at the ways access to medical care, class, race, gender, geography, and of course health affect the impact of both the virus and the state's response and try to see that as a basis for solidarity.

A big part of the state's narrative is unity — the idea that we need to come together as a society around a singular good that is for everyone. People like feeling like they're part of a big group effort and like having the sense of contributing through their own small actions — the same kinds of phenomena that make rebellious social movements possible also enable these moments of mass obedience. We can begin rejecting it by reminding ourselves that the interests of the rich and powerful are fundamentally at odds with our own. Even in a situation where they could get sick or die too (unlike the opioid crisis or the AIDS epidemic before it), their response to the crisis is unlikely to meet our needs and may even intensify exploitation.

The presumed subject of most of the measures like self-isolation and social distancing is middle-class — they imagine a person whose job can easily be worked from home or who has access to paid vacation or sick days (or,

in the worst case, savings), a person with a spacious home, a personal vehicle, without very many close, intimate relationships, with money to spend on childcare and leisure activities. Everyone is asked to accept a level of discomfort, but that increases the further away our lives are from looking like that unstated ideal and compounds the unequal risk of the worst consequences of the virus. One response to this inequality has been to call on the state to do forms of redistribution, by expanding employment insurance benefits, or by providing loans or payment deferrals. Many of these measures boil down to producing new forms of debt for people who are in need, which recalls the outcome of the 2008 financial crash, where everyone shared in absorbing the losses of the rich while the poor were left out to dry.

I have no interest in becoming an advocate for what the state should do and I certainly don't think this is a tipping point for the adoption of more socialistic measures. The central issue to me is whether or not we want the state to have the ability to shut everything down, regardless of what we think of the justifications it invokes for doing so.

The #shutdowncanada blockades were considered unacceptable, though they were barely a fraction as disruptive as the measures the state pulled out just a week later, making clear that it's not the level of disruption that was unacceptable, but rather who is a legitimate actor. Similarly, the government of Ontario repeated constantly the unacceptable burden striking teachers were placing on families with their handful of days of action, just before closing schools for three weeks — again, the problem is that they were workers and not a government or boss. The closure of borders to people but not goods intensifies the nationalist project already underway across the world, and the economic nature of these seemingly moral measures will become more plain once the virus peaks and the calls shift towards 'go shopping, for the economy'.

The state is producing legitimacy for its actions by situating them as simply following expert recommendations, and many leftists echo this logic by calling for experts to be put directly in control of the response to the virus. Both of these are advocating for technocracy, rule by experts. We have seen this in parts of Europe, where economic experts are appointed to head governments to implement 'neutral' and 'objective' austerity measures. Calls to surrender our own agency and to have faith in experts are already common on the left, especially in the climate change movement, and extending that to the virus crisis is a small leap.

It's not that I don't want to hear from experts or don't want there to be individuals with deep knowledge in specific fields — it's that I think the way problems are framed already anticipate their solution. The response to the virus in China gives us a vision of what technocracy

and authoritarianism are capable of. The virus slows to a stop, and the checkpoints, lockdowns, facial recognition technology, and mobilized labour can be turned to other ends. If you don't want this answer, you'd better ask a different question.

So much of social life had already been captured by screens and this crisis is accelerating it — how do we fight alienation in this moment? How do we address the mass panic being pushed by the media, and the anxiety and isolation that comes with it?

How do we take back agency? Mutual aid and autonomous health projects are one idea, but are there ways we can go on the offensive? Can we undermine the ability of the powerful to decide whose lives are worth preserving? Can we go beyond support to challenge property relations? Like maybe building towards looting and expropriations, or extorting bosses rather than begging not to be fired for being sick?

How are we preparing to avoid curfews or travel restrictions, even cross closed borders, should we consider it appropriate to do so? This will certainly involve setting our own standards for safety and necessity, not just accepting the state's guidelines.

How do we push forward other anarchist engagements? Specifically, our hostility to prison in all its forms seems very relevant here. How do we centre and target prison at this moment? How about borders? And should the police get involved to enforce various state measures, how do we delegitimize them and limit their power?

How do we target the way power is concentrating and restructuring itself around us? What interests are poised to "win" at the virus and how do we undermine them? What infrastructure of control is being put in place? Who are the profiteers and how can we hurt them? How do we prepare for what comes next and plan for the window of possibility that might exist in between the worst of the virus and a return to economic normalcy?

Developing our own read on the situation, along with our own goals and practices, is not a small job. It will take the exchange of texts, experiments in action, and communication about the results. It will take broadening our sense of inside-outside to include enough people to be able to organize. It will involve still acting in the public space and refusing to retreat to online space. Combined with measures to deal with the virus, the intense fear and pressure to conform coming from many who would normally be our allies makes even finding space to discuss the crises on different terms a challenge. But if we actually want to challenge the ability of the powerful to shape the response to the virus for their own interests, we need to start by taking back the ability to ask our own questions.

Written in March, 2020.



On the Anarchist response to Covid-19

The Covid19 crisis has presented a challenge to anarchists and others who believe in a fully autonomous and liberated life. We write this today because we feel too many people who in better times carry these political and philosophical banners are setting aside their core beliefs – or worse – by twisting and contorting those beliefs in wholly disappointing ways, conforming to the mandates of technocrats and politicians, and are convincing themselves that doing so is some grand act of solidarity with the most vulnerable people in our societies.

We say loudly that if the political tenets you promote and encourage in the best of times wither and shrink in times of crisis, then your political tenets are worthless. Any system of organization or any belief about human autonomy that needs to be set aside when history lays a challenge at our feet, is not worth keeping around when the emergency subsides. For truly, it is times of difficulty and challenge that place our ideas on the scale of utility to tell us whether or not they are as robust as we may believe.

As anarchists, autonomy over one's own mind and body are essential to our values. We believe that human beings are intelligent enough to decide for themselves how to assess their surroundings and to make determinations on how to go forth living in a way that meets their needs and desires. Of course, we recognize that this autonomy comes packaged with genuine responsibility not only to one's self, but to those with whom they are in community

– including the non-human world. We certainly recognize that individuals may be asked for their cooperation in achieving a collective goal. But we also recognize the fundamental importance of consent in such situations, and that force and punishment are antithetical to an anarchist worldview.

That is why we write today. To reach out to our friends, our comrades, our intellectual and philosophical allies to ask that if you haven't yet, that you begin to seriously critique and question the state responses to the Covid19 pandemic that we are witnessing around the world. We have watched over the preceding year, meekly, quietly, as other anarchists have toed the lines drawn by state bureaucrats. We have remained silent when witnessing anarchists act with hostility towards those who have pushed back against state mandated curfews and lockdown orders, only because those doing the most pushing are affiliated with right wing politics, unfortunately ceding this ground to the right wing, instead of forging their own critiques of state policy and thus providing an intellectual home for those who have in isolation grown antagonistic towards those in power who are trifling with our lives.

The impetus for this behaviour amongst anarchists seems to be rooted in their desire to do well by those in need, and as this particular crisis is being caused by a virus, that seems to unfold as an enthusiastic willingness

to accept state mandates and to shame those who would violate them. It is admirable to want to do well by the elderly and infirm, but that instinct is where the conversation should begin, not where we should resolve to set aside our fundamental principles and to justify this by taking technocrats and politicians at their words, using the pronouncements of sanctioned experts as a gospel by which to claim our lack of resistance to mandate is because the mandate makes such good sense.

Politicians lie. They select the analysis and the technicians who promote their agendas. Corporate executives line up to support them, knowing that the public purse is open to them when they do so. And the media, always wanting to be in the good graces of those with political and financial power, manufacture consent in twenty-four hour news cycles. We know this. We have libraries full of books that we have read and recommended explaining in detail the workings of this reality. Therefore, to be critical of politicians who declare that their emergency violations of basic freedoms are warranted by crisis is always a necessity. To be critical of pharmaceutical executives who tell the public that only they hold the keys to a future of freedom and safety, and of the media who act as propaganda machines in service of official narratives, is always a necessity.

Anarchists seem to know all of this instinctively when the war politicians want us to wage a war fought with literal weapons, when the victims are more obvious, when the propaganda is more nationalist, xenophobic, and racist. But with the Covid19 crisis, the war being waged by those in power is ostensibly a war to save lives, and this shift in presentation seems to have effectively hacked the hearts and minds of so many anarchists who at the bottom of everything, carry a deep and genuine care for others.

But we must pull back and think critically about our situation. It is forgivable when in the throes of a quickly unfolding emergency, while lacking the information necessary to make confident decisions, to want to go along with the experts that are put before podiums when they ask that we all pull together for the greater good. That is no longer the situation. Much time has passed since SARS-COV-2 was a mysterious new respiratory virus. Data has been pouring forth from researchers around the world, and there is now no excuse for fear based decision making, for accepting as gospel the perceptions and prescriptions stamped by the state and distributed by their lackeys in the media.

We believe that this crisis is like all the crises that came before it, in that it is a period of time in which those



with power and wealth see an opportunity to extend their claws and to steal more of both. It is a moment of collective fear and uncertainty they can exploit to seize more control and to enrich themselves at the expense of the masses of humanity. The only thing that seems to separate the Covid19 crisis from those that came before it, is just how willing so much of the public (sadly including many anarchists) is to willingly and enthusiastically support the loss of their own autonomy.

The Science

Right out of the gate we think it is very important to underscore the dangerous, quasi-religious nature of how the media and state are pushing, and how the public is accepting, the notion of a unified scientific consensus on how to politically approach the question of Covid19. First and foremost, science is a method, a tool, and it's foundational premise is that we must always ask questions, and we must always try to falsify our hypothesis. Science is absolutely NOT about consensus, as the right experiment conducted by one person can absolutely demolish established dogmas with new information, and that is science at its most glorious. Further, SARS-COV-2 is a virus that has been known to humanity at large for now just over one year. To suggest that there is a total and irrefutable understanding of its features and dynamics, and that all scientists and researchers and doctors everywhere are all in agreement as to what public policy should be to confront it, is absolutely false.

Also, we enter into very dangerous territory as a society when we allow, nay demand, that experts tucked away in labs using esoteric methods act as the only voices in the room to generate one-size-fits-all policy declarations for entire nations that span massive geographical terrain, for nations populated with vastly diverse groups of human beings who all have different needs. This kind of technocracy is a great cause for concern, as are any pronouncements that those who are skeptical of such schemes of social manipulation are somehow intellectual dullards or that that are anti-scientific.

Science is a tool to illuminate humanity through the elucidation of cause and effect mechanisms. It is a process of discovery. What we do with that illumination, how we go about our lives with the information discovered, is up to us as individuals and as communities.

And finally, it is very easy to fall into a trap of finding competing experts. One side has an expert who says X and the other side finds an expert who says Y, and then we're at an impasse. This is not our intent, however, we feel we are in a double-bind if we do not at some level demonstrate that the narrative out forth by the state and their lap dog media is not as rooted in scientific fact as they would like us to believe. If we do not present some amount of counter evidence, we risk being dismissed out of hand as ignorant, individualists, whose true motivations are "selfish." Cracking through a billion dollar narrative that has been crafted by state and private media around the globe for the better part of a year, all in service of generating an atmosphere of fear and thus compliance, is no easy task, and so, we will now point to some research below in an effort to help our readers build a reality-based, data-backed understanding of the current situation, not to position ourselves as possessing some secret alternative knowledge, but merely to demonstrate that there does exist research that makes many state mandates seem preposterous even from a scientific perspective.

Research

The underlying premise behind lockdowns, closures, and curfews is that these efforts can stop the spread of SARS-COV-2. But can they accomplish this? This is a nuanced question. First, we would acknowledge that if you could isolate every human in their own bubble, yes, you could burn out probably many diseases (while causing a variety of new harms). But that isn't how a mandate functions in reality. Even excluding the shadowy scofflaws who are blamed for the failures of these lockdown efforts from California to London because of their failure to comply with perfection, the fact is that modern civilization requires a massive amount of daily labor in order to prevent it's immediate collapse, and that labor

requires human beings to come into contact with each other, and to travel great distances.

Everything from farm work, to long haul trucking. Power plant operation to plumbers making house calls. Doctors must go to hospital, as must the janitorial and kitchen staff. Fertilizer factories must keep producing for the following season, and so too must the sprawling data centers remain operational for all the white collar professionals to be able to meet via Zoom. Then there are the Amazon warehouses and Wal-Marts! How could we lockdown without our daily deliveries? The list of industries and institutions that cannot close if we expect to have heated homes, drinkable water, functional electric grids, drivable roads, and every other support system of modern life, is very long, and each of them requires human beings to keep them functional. This fact alone means there could never be a 100% lockdown of the population.

Of course, there is the obvious side note that a majority of the labor that must continue, is low wage and/or blue collar. This fact alone makes the very idea of lockdowns a classist enterprise, but this fact has been discussed widely, so we shall move on.

Remember too, these massive lockdowns were never intended (in most places, at the outset) to eliminate Covid19. They were intended to "flatten the curve," which translates to, "slow the spread" of SARS-COV-2 so that hospitals would not be overwhelmed. It should be noted that most hospitals in most locales, never faced this threat, and that even if it is a good idea to prevent hospital overrun, plans to prevent such a scenario would need to be local, not national, or even statewide. As the year progressed, slowly, the perception of the intent of lockdowns has blurred, and politicians and their selected experts have been consistently extending shutdowns, now shifting the rhetoric to focus on the eradication of the virus. This is unacceptable in that it is likely impossible.

As to these lockdown measures and their efficacy, [research has found](#) that they do not have much of an effect when it comes to reducing total caseload:

"Conclusions: While small benefits cannot be excluded, we do not find significant benefits on case growth of more restrictive NPIs. Similar reductions in case growth may be achievable with less restrictive interventions."

Another paper concludes: "Higher Covid death rates are observed in the [25/65°] latitude and in the [-35/-125°] longitude ranges. The national criteria most associated with death rate are life expectancy and its slowdown, public health context (metabolic and non-communicable diseases (NCD) burden vs. infectious diseases prevalence), economy (growth national product, financial support), and environment (temperature, ultra-

violet index). Stringency of the measures settled to fight pandemic, including lockdown, did not appear to be linked with death rate.”

We must absolutely understand that no intervention comes without its costs, and when an intervention involves distance, isolation, and the shut down of people’s usual outlets for social interaction and support, those costs are borne by the physical, mental, and emotional health of the public. We cannot destroy public health to save public health. [This editorial from the British Medical Journal](#) states:

“Lockdowns can also cause long term health harms, such as from delayed treatment and investigations. Delays in the diagnosis and treatment of various types of cancer, for example, can allow progression of cancer and affect patients’ survival. A three month delay to surgery is estimated to cause more than 4700 deaths a year in the UK. In the US, delays in screening and treatment are estimated to cause 250,000 additional preventable deaths of cancer patients each year.

Furthermore, a sharp decrease in the number of admissions for acute coronary syndromes and emergency coronary procedures has been observed since the start of the pandemic in the US and Europe. In England, the weekly number of hospital admissions for coronary syndromes fell by 40% between mid-February and the end of March 2020. Fear of exposure to the virus stopped many patients from attending hospital, putting them at increased risk of long term complications of myocardial infarction.”

Despite the push by the people in power to present their preferred draconian measures as totally supported by “the science,” there is much disagreement amongst researchers and doctors as to how best to move through this crisis. [Scientific American](#) writes:

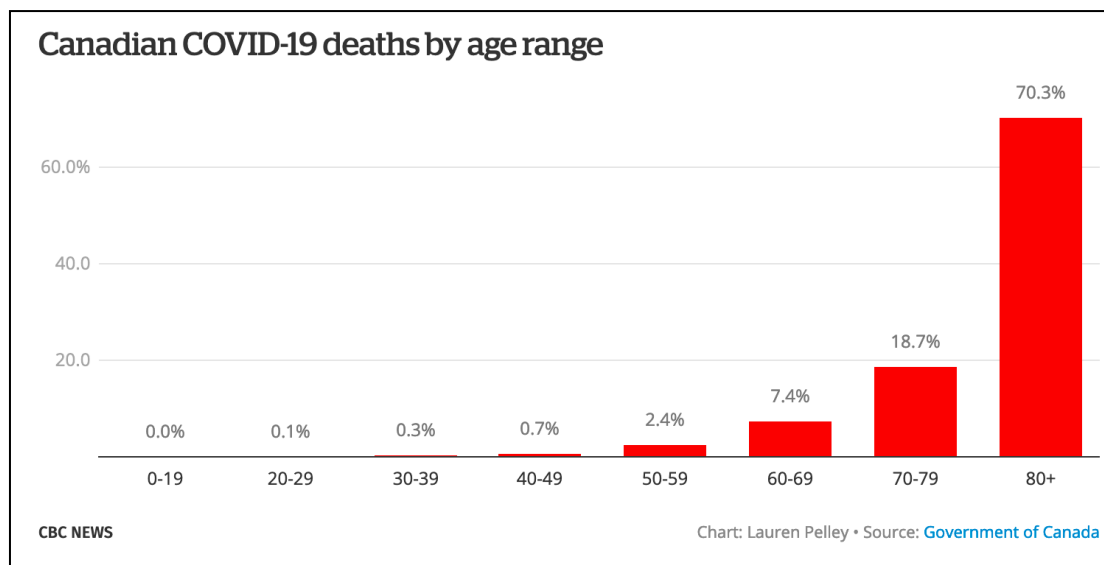
“In today’s COVID-19 wars, the global scientific divide leans heavily in favour of active, and sometimes

even draconian, public health interventions, including widespread locking down of nonessential business, mandating masks, restricting travel and imposing quarantines. On the other side, some doctors, scientists and public health officials are questioning the wisdom of this approach in the face of massive unknowns about their efficacy and in light of the clear and growing evidence that such measures may not be working in some cases, and may also be causing net harm. As people are thrown out of work as a direct result of lockdowns, and as more and more families find themselves unable to cover their rent or food, there have been sharp increases in domestic violence, homelessness and illegal drug use.”

When justifying harsh lockdowns and curfews, many people lean into the danger presented by Covid19, without fully understanding the actual level of threat posed by the illness. Due to the alarmist posture of the media – an industry we know bases their success on capturing attention, and which also goes to great pains to push official political narratives – many people believe that an infection with SARS-COV-2 is far more deadly than it actually is. According to a study authored by Stanford’s John P. Ioannidis, the Infection Fatality Rate globally is quite low:

“Infection fatality rate in different locations can be inferred from seroprevalence studies. While these studies have caveats, they show IFR ranging from 0.00% to 1.54% across 82 study estimates. Median IFR across 51 locations is 0.23% for the overall population and 0.05% for people <70 years old. IFR is larger in locations with higher overall fatalities. Given that these 82 studies are predominantly from hard-hit epicentres, IFR on a global level may be modestly lower. Average values of 0.15%-0.20% for the whole global population and 0.03%-0.04% for people <70 years old as of October 2020 are plausible. These values agree also with the WHO estimate of 10% global infection rate (hence, IFR ~ 0.15%) as of early October 2020.”

We also are aware of a common sentiment that lockdowns could eliminate SARS-COV-2 if only they were stricter, and if only every person participated perfectly. This is the sort of unfalsifiable thinking that politicians and pundits like to push to excuse the failure of previous measures to have the desired outcomes, as well as



to target their opposing politicians who they like to insist “dropped the ball,” and who should therefore bear the blame for the pandemic’s toll. Any policy that requires 100% compliance is doomed to fail from the outset. Even ignoring our earlier point about the labor required to maintain society, there will never be 100% compliance from all human beings on anything.

We think it is also necessary to make plain that a new coronavirus is not something that would be detected immediately by doctors or researchers when it makes its first jump from animal to human. Because coronaviruses are common, and because they induce similar symptoms (as well as having a symptom course similar to other forms of respiratory viruses), and as SARS-COV-2 is not symptomatic in a third of people who contract it, it is not surprising that it was circulating the Earth before anyone knew to look for it.

It has now been confirmed that SARS-COV-2 was circulating in Italy in September of 2019:

“SARS-CoV-2 RBD-specific antibodies were detected in 111 of 959 (11.6%) individuals, starting from September 2019 (14%), with a cluster of positive cases (>30%) in the second week of February 2020 and the highest number (53.2%) in Lombardy. This study shows an unexpected very early circulation of SARS-CoV-2 among asymptomatic individuals in Italy several months before the first patient was identified, and clarifies the onset and spread of the coronavirus disease 2019”

It was circulating in the UK in December:

“Professor Tim Spector, epidemiologist at King’s College London, leads the Zoe Covid Symptom Study, tracking symptoms reported by patients during the pandemic.

He said data collected “clearly shows many people had the virus back in December”.

It was also circulating in the US back in late fall of 2019: “These confirmed reactive sera included 39/1,912 (2.0%) donations collected between December 13-16, 2019, from residents of California (23/1,912) and Oregon or Washington (16/1,912). Sixty seven confirmed reactive (67/5,477, 1.2%) donations were collected between December 30, 2019, and January 17, 2020, from residents of Massachusetts (18/5,477), Wisconsin or Iowa (22/5,477), Michigan (5/5,477), and Connecticut or Rhode Island (33/5,477).”

Other examples exist demonstrating that SARS-COV-2 was circulating in various countries around the world prior to confirmation of its existence coming out of China. As time unfolds, it is likely we will get a fuller picture of what this circulation looked like, but we can safely presume that if there are antibodies within people on various continents in December of 2019, that circulation of the virus would have begun months prior to that. And we point this fact out, again, to emphasize that

there was likely no lockdown measure that could have been implemented to snuff out the virus, as it had already gotten such an incredible head start.

On Principle

As anarchists, there are principles we return to as guiding stars in the dark night of the unknown, and these include freedom, autonomy, consent, and a deep belief in the ability of people to self-organize for their maximum benefit as individuals and as communities. No one knows one’s needs better than they do themselves, and truly, most people have self-preservation instincts that cause them to select behaviours that lead to their own safety and survival, as well as that of those they care for.

At the outset of the pandemic, when information was scant, we very much witnessed people making choices to distance themselves from crowds and gatherings they did not believe were essential, while they also began efforts to support and care for those who might be more vulnerable to a circulating respiratory illness that did not have well established treatment courses within the medical field.

While we welcome information and data, even that which is unpleasant, that describes the continually unfolding circumstances, we also believe that people need to be trusted to analyze that information. The current paradigm has the state and their selected technocratic experts filtering the available data and only highlighting that which supports the policy decisions they already decided to implement without any public input. Information and analysis that can be considered “good news” has been largely ignored by the state and their technocrats, while also being blacked out by the media.

“Experts” can always be found to justify horrors. Indeed, we would likely be hard pressed to find a case in recent history in which massive crimes against humanity did not come packaged with a stamp of approval from some consortium of experts whom everyone else was asked to blindly trust. The Covid19 pandemic is no different, and as anarchists we just ask that you remember that debate, critique, and dissent are all essential components of societies that value liberation and autonomy. We ask that whatever you decide about the efficacy of lockdown measures, that you recognize no situation, no matter how dire it may seem, warrants edicts from on high that use the threat of force and violence to accomplish their aims.

Our steadfast commitment to human autonomy, and to our belief that no authority is valid without the consent of those it is exercised over, is what makes anarchism a thing apart from other political philosophies. We will not abandon this commitment, and hope that you will not either.

Our position on the Covid-19 Crisis

by the South Essex Heckler

We've come in for a bit of criticism over the last couple of days for our views on the government response to the COVID-19 crisis. Firstly, we'd like to start off by saying that our position on the response to the crisis has changed since it started to emerge at the end of February. At that point, it felt like a massive unknown and that starting to develop our own response in terms of physical distancing and withdrawing from events we were due to participate in seemed to be the sensible thing to do.

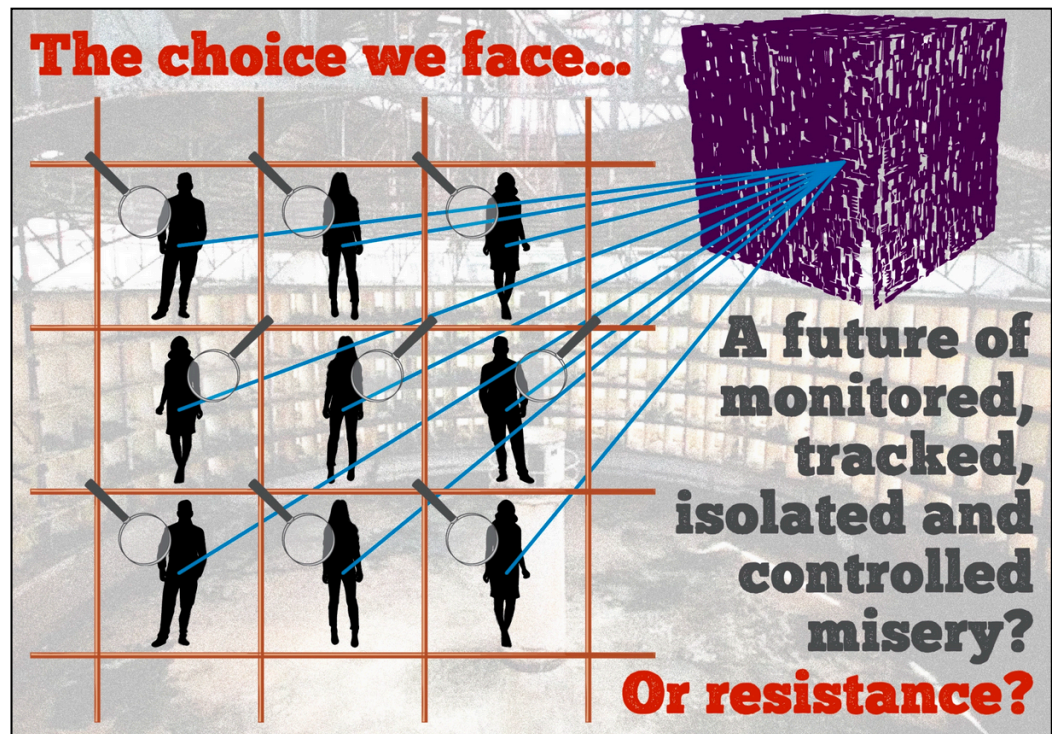
Anarchists played a part in this process, working out other ways we could interact with each other while avoiding being physically close as a precaution. They also did and are still doing seriously good work with grassroots mutual aid projects. There was a feeling that this was something that anarchism could own.

For us, that sense of ownership was taken away once the government stepped in to impose their own measures which ended up placing all of us under restrictions that most of us have never experienced in our lives. The legislation the government brought into to implement and enforce these restrictions turned what we were voluntarily undertaking for what we thought would only last a month or so into something that is being done to us with no end in sight.

While we get that those anarchists who initiated ways of dealing what they perceived to be the threat in the early stages of the crisis want to retain ownership of that, with top down legislation and enforcement, the dynamic changed. As the lockdown went on, the negative impact it was having on people's lives started to become more apparent. We're talking about the social and mental health impacts ranging from disrupted relationships and isolation through to an increase in the number of suicides. Also,

the long term economic impact which we'll be paying for with mass unemployment and austerity will have a devastating impact on our lives.

As we went into May, routes out of the lockdown that involved surveillance, tracking and further losses of personal autonomy and freedom were being discussed. It was also becoming clear that in order to free up as much bed space in hospitals as possible, elderly patients with the COVID-19 virus were effectively being dumped into care homes. The ensuing tragedy in care homes staffed by low paid workers without the resources to deal with the subsequent wave of infections and deaths has been described by a fair few people as little more than a thinly



disguised cull.

All of this prompted us to start asking some serious questions about the narrative we were being fed. That involved a fair bit of reading around and keeping an open mind. Yes, that process did take us into some weird areas that were veering towards what some would term as conspiracy theory. It also led us to take a look at some of the alt right takes on the issue so we could understand how they were exploiting people's concerns about the lockdown for their own ends. All of this was a necessary

research process that helped with our building the list of COVID-19 crisis readings on this blog. A list that we're prepared to defend as not, in our opinion, going anywhere near conspiracy theory.

Mind you, what is and isn't conspiracy theory is a grey area and one influenced by subjective understanding and opinion. What has made us more than a bit annoyed is the instant, reflexive dismissal by a number of anarchists of some of the readings we have listed as being 'conspiracy theory'. Given the restrictions we're already under plus what will be coming down the line at us if we don't start showing some signs of resistance, it's a bit alarming that what we consider as reasonable warnings are getting dismissed out of hand.

As we've noted before, we're in an unprecedented situation. In a 24/7 news and social media landscape, trying to tease out the signal from the noise is a difficult task. One thing is abundantly clear, the massive number of powers the government has conferred upon itself will not be given up without the fight of our lives. That's not conspiracy theory – it's just paying attention to the lessons of history. Before long, it's highly likely that powers that were ostensibly brought in to deal with the COVID-19 crisis will be deployed against us in another 'crisis'.

All we've been trying to do is alert people in order that the right strategies and tactics to resist what's very likely coming our way can be developed. The range of grassroots mutual aid initiatives that have emerged to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis certainly offer some hope. As well as dealing with the COVID-19 crisis,

they will have a role in dealing with the dire consequences of an inevitable economic depression and the crushing austerity that will be inflicted upon us. We hope these mutual aid groups will also take on the task of resisting an increasingly intrusive and oppressive state, aided and abetted by the large corporations they've outsourced many of their functions to.

The point is that it shouldn't be an either/or situation in being involved with a mutual aid group dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the one hand and on the other, developing a strategy of resistance to deal with and defeat the dystopia to come. It's just that from where we are, it feels like some groups are focusing on mutual aid as a way of not having to face up to the totalitarian dystopia the government and the corporations will likely be inflicting upon us.

That is why we've probably come over as a bit stropic at times because to us, it feels like there's not the sense of urgency there should be about what's coming. We're not saying this to score intellectual points or to look clever. It's because we'd like a future where we can lead a full, meaningful life as opposed to one where we merely exist as a cog for as long as the machine will tolerate us. That's not just for us as individuals or family, it's also for our community and all of our comrades. Basically, it's an existential threat that we take personally.

As this is intended to be a statement, we've tried to keep it as brief as we can. The aim is to explain how we've come to our position in the hope that this can help in the discussion about where we go from here. We look forward to a constructive discussion.





The Emerging Political Divide

We've been activists in one guise or another for more decades than we care to remember. The ongoing and still evolving COVID-19 crisis is shaping up to be the most significant and seismic event we've experienced. In a situation like this, it can be all too easy to allow yourself to be sucked into the day to day passage of events and in trying to deal with and process them as best as you can, to not take a few steps back and try to see the bigger picture. A 24/7 bombardment of news (or what passes for news), opinion, speculation, rumours and a fair few outright lies from a range of news, comment and social media platforms makes the job of trying to isolate some signal from the cacophony of noise a difficult task.

We've done our level best to analyze the COVID-19 crisis with an open mind. If you take a look back at the posts we've written about the crisis since it started to hit in early March, it's pretty clear that our thinking has evolved since that early point. In a dynamic, fast moving situation, having a rigid mindset and refusing to alter that will undermine any serious attempt to understand what's happening, let alone devise the strategy and tactics needed to deal with what you're facing.

In the early part of March, we took the attitude that in light of what we knew at the time about COVID-19, a sensible response was some form of lockdown and a

degree of self isolation. This was seen as a reasonable precaution to take while we took stock of the situation, with the intention of allowing our analysis, strategy and tactics to evolve as our understanding improved. We actually withdrew from participating in an event in March because we were concerned about the possibility of contracting the virus in what was a confined and busy environment. Knowing what we know now, would we have made the same decision? No, we most likely would have concluded that attending didn't carry any significant risk and would have participated in the event. However, based on what we knew at that point in early March, withdrawing from the event seemed to be the right decision to make.

The major factor that made us change our thinking about the crisis has been the response of not just the UK government, but pretty much all governments across the globe, in dealing with the coronavirus. Speaking from our personal experience, we're over two months into an unprecedented level of restrictions on who we can associate with, how and where we shop, where we can go to get some fresh air and for us as non-drivers, on (not) using public transport. We're now at the launch of the app for our phones that will alert us if we've been in contact with anyone who has COVID-19 and then, we'll

be pretty much told to self isolate for fourteen days. As an aside, from what is admittedly the social and political bubble we inhabit, the demand for cheap and cheerful burner phones will be soaring over the next few weeks from people who rightly don't want to be tracked and monitored 24/7.

On top of the restrictions on movement and association plus the roll out of an alert app which is basically a means of monitoring our every move, the economy has taken a massive hit. The kind of hit that will wipe out many small, independent shops, cafes, pubs, restaurants, music venues...the list goes on. The kind of hit that allows the large corporations to suck up more assets for themselves. The kind of hit that the hedge funds and their like are making obscene amounts of money from. The kind of hit that will lead to more wealth being concentrated in fewer hands while the rest of us face an increasingly restricted and impoverished future.

Faced with all of this, it would be negligent of us to not do our level best to draw attention to what's going on and to prompt people to start asking the questions that need to be asked about why we are where we are. The problem is that as soon as you start to do this, the accusations of 'conspiracy theory' start flying around. Some of those accusations have come from so-called 'anarchists' who we hoped would have known better. That is most likely down to many of them having been taken in by the relentless barrage of what we would term as 'fear porn' we've been subjected to for the last few months. A barrage that is a form of psychological warfare, also known more colloquially as psy-ops.

Fear is an amazing tool for securing compliance from the populace for whatever nefarious aims the government of the day and their corporate backers may have in mind. After two months of 'stay two metres away' from any other human, the constant pavement dancing needed to adhere to this, interacting with masked up retail staff through plastic screens, seeing plans for school re-openings that will see kids physically kept apart from their peers, it should be all too clear we're being conditioned to fear each other. As we've written before, what makes us truly human with the need for face to face and physical contact is being torn away from us as we're reduced to atomized, fearful and increasingly easier to control individuals ever more reliant on authority to guide us through the 'crisis'.

The problem is the number of political activists we know who we thought would have known better, yet have been taken in by this climate of fear. Once you succumb to this fear, it's harder to take a few steps back and try to form an objective assessment of what's going on. As well as what we've touched upon above, what is also going on is what seems to be a profound reformulation of political and social divides. The labels left and right are starting to

become less relevant. What is starting to emerge in the ongoing confusion and chaos is a divide between those of us who value personal and collective autonomy at the grassroots on the one hand and on the other, those who look to the state to provide 'solutions' to problems, regardless of how totalitarian those 'solutions' may turn out to be. The point is that those who are willing to trade their freedoms for what is an illusion of safety will end up with neither.

After more decades in political activism than we care to remember, we've learnt that nothing is ever clear cut. The divide that's emerging between those who value autonomy and those who look to the state for their security is far from clear cut! What has struck us are the 'anarchists' who appear to be quite happy with the lockdown and all of the restrictions that come with it. 'Anarchists' who have succumbed to the fear porn to the extent that they are accusing the UK government of 'incompetence' in suppressing the spread of COVID-19. Sadly, this is what happens when you buy into the fear porn and render yourself unable to take a step back to ask the critical questions that need to be asked about what's being done to us. Suffice to say that there are a number of 'anarchists' we once regarded as comrades who we no longer feel we can work with.

As old political definitions and divides become redundant while new ones emerge, we'll find ourselves with some strange bedfellows. Some may end up as firm allies, some may eventually end up as opponents or enemies. The point is that we have to remain open minded and flexible during this ever evolving and often confusing situation. We're not always going to get it right and yes, if we get through this, in a few years time we may well look back and ask ourselves why the heck did we align ourselves with these particular people?!

To come to some kind of conclusion, given that our personal and collective autonomy is on the line, it's better to remain open minded and willing to experiment with new alliances. A rigid adherence to a particular line, a refusal to countenance new alliances and condemnation of those of us who are open minded and willing to experiment will inadvertently usher in a techno totalitarian future where we'll merely exist as opposed to living a full life. A caveat... Pieces like this are a snapshot in a dynamic, constantly evolving and often, confusing situation. Some of these may survive the test of time, some most definitely won't. As ever, constructive criticism and comradely debate are welcome.

A Sort of Warning:

We've had week after week of wall to wall coverage of the COVID-19 crisis in the media. The question is, how many people are still paying attention to it and how many, for the sake of their sanity, are choosing to switch

off from it? If this ever ends, it would be an interesting exercise to conduct research on what effect this barrage of coverage has had on people's mental health. It would also be interesting to see how much this relentless coverage has further undermined people's already shrinking faith in the media.

We've been doing what we can to try and keep up with developments but to be honest, we have days when the stress of trying to discern any meaningful signal from the cacophony of noise is so overwhelming, we simply switch off and try to re-focus the following day. Having said this, a still somewhat scratchy picture is starting to emerge of what we face in the coming months and years as the COVID-19 crisis evolves and morphs into something that will quite possibly be sinister and dystopian.

Fault lines are emerging. On the one hand, there are those who by and large accept the lockdown and the need for it to go on for some considerable time and also, are largely supportive of whatever tracking and monitoring measures have been mooted to ostensibly limit and eventually eliminate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. On the other hand, there are those who have taken a look at the relentless coverage of the crisis, smelt a rat and are starting to question the narrative we're being fed, particularly when that is being used to justify measures which will restrict our freedom and subject us to more surveillance. As regular readers of the Heckler may have gathered, we tend towards the latter. We're anarchists and as we're supposed to accept no higher authority than ourselves and those we collectively organize with, it would be downright negligent of us to not question the narrative we're being fed!

Coming right in over the top of this is the threat of more austerity to 'pay' for the money the government has spent in 'dealing' with the COVID-19 crisis. The impact of the last round of austerity is still being felt and has decimated the lives of millions of working class people. Another round of austerity will leave millions with nothing left to lose.

So, all of the extra powers the government has conferred upon itself and all of the surveillance and tracking that's coming our way, ostensibly to deal with COVID-19, will certainly come in handy when the shit hits the fan as the next wave of austerity is sent to crush us. Just one example are the powers that could see restrictions or bans on large gatherings for the rest of the year and quite possibly, into 2021. As we've mentioned previously, large gatherings will take in demonstrations and radical/anarchist book-fairs. Which leaves us with mutual aid work and online propagandizing. If you keep your mutual aid work away from digital networks as far as possible, avoid any hierarchy, keep it grassroots and face to face, you'll get by. Those of us who are basically propagandists and because of the dearth of opportunities

to physically distribute our material, pretty much have to rely on being online, will be facing a very uncertain future as we slide towards more authoritarianism.

On the subject of restrictions, there are strong rumours that many cafes, pubs and restaurants will not open again until close to Christmas. While those of us whose jobs have survived this massive economic shock will be gradually returning to work, there will be little or no socializing because there won't be anywhere to go. Life will be reduced to work, commute, eat, sleep, commute, work...repeat on loop, ad infinitum. Entertainment will not be the company of friends but whatever is being piped down to our TVs. A diet of fear-mongering so called 'news' designed to keep us frightened and reliant on the authorities to look after us. Sprinkled with a toxic dose of divide and rule to keep us divided, atomized and easier to manipulate and control.

That's for those 'lucky' enough to still be in 'steady' work. For the millions more who'll be on precarious zero hours contracts or unemployed, struggling to find work in an economy that's been gutted and reliant on Universal Credit, life will be grim. For those who are disabled and rely on Universal Credit and a gutted public sector for the support they need, life is already horrendous as they find themselves increasingly thrown to the margins. As it is for the elderly in care homes pretty much unable to access hospital treatment and finding that they're subject to 'Do Not Resuscitate' notices. We're in a society where some lives are seen as worth considerably less than others – based on how much people can or can't contribute to the 'bottom line'. When that narrative starts to become widely accepted, what is essentially a cull by a combination of neglect and malice starts to become normalized.

The lockdown is tearing us apart from each other. If a loved one has been diagnosed as having COVID-19 before they passed away, not only were you not allowed to be with them in their final hours if they were in hospital, you're not allowed to see their body before cremation. Numbers are strictly limited at the funeral with physical distancing enforced and no wake afterwards. At a point in life where you need to emotional and physical support of family and friends, it's denied to you. People are going to be mentally scarred by experiencing the passing of a loved one in this way for the rest of their lives.

We live opposite a park with play equipment, now taped off. It's been silent since March when the lockdown was brought in. Along with the closure of nurseries and schools, kids have been denied the opportunity to play with each other. Play is not a frivolous activity. From toddlers onwards, play is how kids learn to interact with each other. It's how they learn to negotiate, compromise and co-operate with each other. It's how they learn from mistakes and go on to become fully rounded human beings. Denying kids the opportunity to play for any



significant length of time is going to cause long term developmental and mental health issues down the line.

Adolescence is when kids really start to work out who they are. It's when kids quite rightly want to assert their independence and get out into the world. It's when long term friendships are formed. It's when they develop a support network of their peers. Can you imagine what an adolescent will be feeling when all of this is denied to them as they face what is to all intents and purposes, indefinite house arrest? A 'normal' adolescent will find this hard enough. Anyone with mental health issues will find this agonizing. Tragically, this has already led to adolescents feeling they have no option but to take their lives.

Lockdown with an abusive partner or parent is a nightmare that doesn't even bear thinking about. It's a potential death sentence. Anyone advocating the continuation of the lockdown really needs to have some thought as to what urgently has to happen to prevent any more tragedies where an individual has been killed by an abusive partner or parent.

As we've written previously, it really does feel like we're being subjected to a massive psychological experiment. One in which we're simultaneously being subjected to an unprecedented level of fear-mongering and being torn apart from each other. One in which we're being made to feel that the only option of being able to move forwards is to subject ourselves to a loss of autonomy through increased tracking and surveillance, ostensibly for our own good. One in which our hopes and plans for the future have been trashed. One in which we're being atomized and made ever more dependent on the whims of our rulers for our survival. One which has already turned into a fucking nightmare for a lot of people and will do for many more of us.

It seems that when a commentator uses the word 'reset' to describe the social and economic turmoil that's coming our way, the accusations of 'conspiracy theory' start flying around. The last few weeks have been quite revealing in terms of where those accusations have been coming from because a fair number of them have come from people who consider themselves to be 'radical' and a few from so called 'anarchists'. The point is that the global lockdown has caused an economic shock of historic proportions that like previous shocks, will end up seeing more wealth concentrated in fewer hands. As has already been seen in the years since the banking crash of 2008.

So, people who may think they're doing the right thing by supporting restrictions on movement and gatherings, as well as increased tracking and surveillance are actually supporting the creation and enhancement of an apparatus that will completely screw our lives and freedoms. All we ask is that you take a deep breath, take a few steps back, do your best to get some perspective and start to ask some hard questions about what's being done to us. If those questions aren't asked and we continue on the trajectory we're on, for many of us, life will become mere existence as we're effectively plugged into a dystopian matrix. Many may not even survive to experience this.

You may find this hard to believe but we'd really love it if we were wrong on everything we've written above. Trust us, we want to wake up and find this has all been a bad dream. The thing is, we wake up every morning, check our news feed, see the deserted playground opposite us, feel that tightening, sickening feeling in our guts and realize this is reality. We've got an all too narrow window of opportunity to act and start to resist what's happening to us. If we don't, not only are we screwed, generations to come will be as well.

Kissing is Prohibited

(comrades from Chile reflect on the crisis)

There is nothing new about social life taking place at a distance. For a long time now people have been persuaded that the best way to communicate and relate is through the use of a device. Prostheses of the human being, the smartphone and its like, have transformed the way of being together, of being informed, learning, communicating, writing and reading.

The next step is the robotization of living, technique pervading every place, every aspect of daily life. An overcoming of nature and the natural in favour of artificial beings and places. Such a scenario needs no social life, it does not need relationships, feelings, thoughts, it only needs order, discipline, regulation, machines. Maybe Dominion is trying to take a step forward and use a health problem, the spread of a virus, to reach generalized regimentation at least, the rest will then take care of itself. Science fiction comes to mind, but States have centuries old instruments to draw on without having to resort to the unknown.

The social distancing imposed by laws prohibiting kisses and hugs and the suppression of most social activities, recalls states of emergency in which the rules of social life are imposed and must be obeyed so as not to run up against getting charged or being arrested. And indeed the establishment of red zones and checkpoints, limitation of freedom of circulation, obligation of home isolation for those coming from areas considered infected controlled by police, but above all the ban on gatherings, i.e. public meetings, is the police management of a health problem. Not surprisingly it is foreseen in the ten rules recommended by the Italian State to avoid the spread of the virus that in case of fever the carabinieri must be the first to be contacted. But states of emergency are also the measures provided for in situations of conflict or insurrection, as happened recently in Chile.

The State decrees by law that citizens are its property and it can dispose of them as it sees fit. States of emergency are not imposed for health reasons or the population's welfare, but to make rules become introjected, to instil discipline. And indeed, the surest way to obtain obedience is to spread terror, fear. Create anxiety and panic, continually divulging data, making everything sensationalistic and exceptional. Frightening is a practice of war and torture as well as of government,

and States are specialized in this too. And war has forcefully come back into vogue after being removed and cancelled out for many years. Today the war is here, indeed everywhere. Heads of State are declaring themselves at war against a somewhat singular enemy, a virus, but their real adversary or target is not that, it is their very subjects. For this reason the issue at stake, perhaps the most important, is to keep critical thinking alive without downplaying anything. Having, arm in arm with the Economy, industrialized and devastated nature and desertified thought, now feelings are being cancelled out. No kisses, no hugs.

However, if Dominion wants us totally dependent on it, if the State cancels social and in part also economic life, that means that we don't need the State. That we can self-organize our initiatives, our forms of education, our economies, our leisure. And also in this case we don't need to resort to science fiction but to experience, memory, our will and courage.

The prisoners fighting in the Italian prisons that this state of emergency would like to see buried alive are showing a way. That normality be interrupted, yes, but by revolt.



Thank you for reading!

We hope that you have enjoyed this zine. We have made it our mission to shift anarchist discourse in regards to the coronavirus and the current propaganda-blitzkrieg being waged the population. When we began, we didn't know what people's responses would be. We thought that perhaps that we would be cancelled for contradicting the groupthink. We found, to the contrary, that people have thanked us profusely. Clearly there is a great hunger for critical analysis. Just as we reject the logic that dissent in war-time should be suppressed in the name of national unity, likewise we reject the logic that a protracted emergency means that we should fall into lockstep with those who claim authority over us.

If you did appreciate this zine, please take a minute to write us at nevermorezine@riseup.net. It really means a lot to us when we get some positive feedback. This project is a labour of love, and encouragement motivates us to keep plugging away. We will be creating an email list, so if you would like to keep abreast of developments, send us a message asking to subscribe.

The number one thing that you can do to support this project is to help distribute physical copies. Please print out copies of this zine and distribute them to people who will read them.

We are starting work on a second volume forthwith. We welcome submissions of original writing, artwork, and whatever else you want to send us.. We would like for this journal to become not just a place to publish careful critiques but also art that speaks to what it feels like to be living through this very confusing time in history, so please share your personal writing with us!

We are also looking for people who are willing to volunteer their services as translators. We are very interested in reports from different parts of the world,

and we hope that by offering first-hand accounts from various parts of the world, a clearer picture of what is going on will emerge.

Also, if you have criticisms of this zine, please. Our method of inquiry is to assume that we are prone to logical fallacies, and that we must correct for our own biases by attempting to disprove our own assumptions. If you have a correction, even a minor one, please write us and we will include the correction in the next volume. We want to be wrong! We also are willing to offer space for anarchists who disagree with our analysis. Our goal with this journal is to kickstart discussion and debate, so if you have an opposing perspective, write us, and we may publish your critique.

The truth doesn't go away when people stop believing in it. A society can become schizophrenic, and wage war against the truth, but the truth will always keep existing. It is impartial, non-partisan, and abides forever, whether or not people choose to believe in it. And it will always have an allure, because curiosity is a natural human instinct, and understanding of the truth confers advantages, for knowledge is power. Even if we are in for some dark days, so long as human beings exist, there will always be resurgences of the desire to know the truth.

Societies suppress truth at their own peril, just as civilizations that attempt to dominate the natural world will in time learn the error of their ways. For thousands of years, many empires have attempted to stamp out the disobedient heretics who refuse to believe what the state wants the people to believe, and we're still here. The desire for freedom is a powerful force, and we will never surrender it.

For the wild,
NEVERMORE



WE SHALL ABOLISH THE ORGASM!

"IN OUR WORLD, THERE WILL BE NO EMOTIONS EXCEPT FEAR, RAGE, TRIUMPH, AND SELF-ABASEMENT.

THE SEX INSTINCT WILL BE ERADICATED. WE SHALL ABOLISH THE ORGASM.

THERE WILL BE NO LOYALTY, EXCEPT LOYALTY TO THE PARTY, BUT ALWAYS THERE WILL BE THE INTOXICATION OF POWER.

ALWAYS AT EVERY MOMENT, THERE WILL BE THE THRILL OF VICTORY, THE SENSATION OF TRAMPLING ON AN ENEMY WHO IS HELPLESS.

IF YOU WANT A PICTURE OF THE FUTURE, IMAGINE A BOOT STAMPING ON A HUMAN FACE FOREVER."

THE MORAL TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS DANGEROUS NIGHTMARE SITUATION IS A SIMPLE ONE. DON'T LET IT HAPPEN. IT DEPENDS ON YOU."

- GEORGE ORWELL

