

The COVID-19 Crisis In Ecuador

Introduction by Hari Kumar; translations by Alfonso Casal. Final version 17 April, 2020

In an [earlier article](#) we first discussed attitude Marxists should take to the COVID-19 crisis on March 17, 2020. After the longer term picture was becoming clear to us, we also published [Marxist-Leninist Theses: The aftermath of the Corona virus \(COVID19\) Health care crisis and short term demands](#). In the latter article we stated:

“Even more alarming is the situation in those countries such as the former colonial and semi- colonial countries. There even such crumbs are inconceivable, where the problems faced are horrendous...

We agree with the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador (PCMLE) that the policy of “*the bourgeoisie and imperialism, that prioritizes primary-export production for international markets*” – place countries like Ecuador in a peril....

“In many ex-colonial countries, the stranglehold of the foreign imperial cartels remains intact. For instance, in Ecuador, the main revenue stream for the state has been oil. But given the price war being fought over oil – revenues are plummeting in **Ecuador**, which is a ‘*puppet at the mercy of the winds*’:

“Ecuador (is) a puppet at the mercy of the winds and the government with no plan to deal with the situation. The economic growth model imposed on Ecuador by the bourgeoisie and imperialism, that prioritizes primary-export production for international markets - is once again questioned in the wake of the decline in oil prices and the decisions taken by several countries to deal with the current situation... All Ecuadorian exportable products, starting with oil, passing through wood and ending up in the banana has been suffering sales reductions since February to date, as is the case for tourism. Oil, the main source of tax revenue, was budgeted for this year at \$51.30 a barrel, but is barely being sold at \$28.” (PCMLE).”

We agreed with demands for debt cancellation:

“An additional fundamental demand that could be made jointly by workers and toilers in both the periphery (countries like Ecuador) and the central dominant imperialist capitalist states, is to cancel the international debts. The programme of demands for each individual country will obviously be different. “

Now some weeks later, an ever and increasingly clear understanding has been gained.

It is known what is needed to avert mass deaths and hunger in the poorest countries and within them, the poorest sectors of the workers and toilers. Yet the ruling classes of the former colonial countries do not care about the effect of the pandemic upon their own poor.

An illustration of this comes from the tragedy unfolding in Ecuador. We give below translations from the paper of the Communist Party Ecuador Marxist-Leninist (*En Marcha*). These were web-based translations, but corrected by Alfonso Casals.

We believe they do give an sense of the unfolding tragedy, and an understanding of the analyses of the PCMLE in regards to the crisis unfolding.

We think these are of interest to all who think of themselves as Marxist-Leninists.

At this moment in time, we see a huge rise in the political consciousness of people, world-wide. While not a revolution yet, we are reminded of Lenin's words that:

“During a revolution, millions and tens of millions of people learn in a week more than they do in a year of ordinary, somnolent life. For at the time of a sharp turn in the life of an entire people it becomes particularly clear what aims the various classes of the people are pursuing, what strength they possess, and what methods they use.” *V.I Lenin, 1977, Moscow, Volume 25, pages 227-243.*

We believe that we are at a new world nodal point. But at this time, the subjective element – the Marxist-Leninist forces are split and divided everywhere. We believe that the working class and toilers of the world, will be facing the unfolding aftermath of the COVID 19 crisis. In this, the international bourgeoisie will attempt to resurrect their profits by a combination of reforms and repression.

To resist it a Marxist-Leninist unity worldwide is required.

How this is achieved is an urgent matter for Marxist-Leninists to discuss.



Semanario En Marcha

Los trabajadores
y los pueblos forjan su unidad
y organización para conquistar la
liberación social y nacional, así como la
eliminación de toda forma de opresión.

Portada del sitio > Editorial > Por delante está la vida de los trabajadores y el pueblo

25 DE MARZO DE 2020

Por delante está la vida de los trabajadores y el pueblo

EN MARCHA

<http://www.pcmle.org/EM/spip.php?article10442>

Ahead is the life of the workers and the people

Ecuador has been caught by the COVID19 pandemic, along with most countries on the planet. It is senseless to say how many people are so far affected; because the number is growing every day, every hour. The health systems are unable either to care for those affected or fully control the disease; instead efforts are aimed at slowing down the speed of contagion.

For years, following neoliberal policies, state health systems were severely affected with: budget cuts, privatizations, creation of private security systems and, with the dominance of pharmaceutical monopolies in the market. Now people are suffering the consequences. Not content with what they have already done, today – in several countries - the private sectors ask for subsidies. They ask because “they do not have the capacity to face the crisis”. They even try to take advantage of the moment to deepen neoliberal policies. This is proposed by bourgeois economists in our country, among which are Mauricio Pozo, Alberto Acosta Burneo, Jaime Carrera and others. Imagine what would happen if the entire health and social security system were in private hands, as in the dream of neoliberals!

Shortages in hospitals, and workers and health professionals (who work in difficult conditions) are seen in all provinces. That has long been denounced, and little or nothing has been done to solve it. According to the World Health Organization, the efficiency of medical care in our country is ranked 111 out of 191 countries. That explains what is happening.

The crisis we are living makes visible a social phenomenon that while not hidden, was underestimated by many. That is the millions of men and women who live in extreme poverty, for whom staying at home is as risky for life as when going out to get your daily bread. These people are the product of capitalism. Today capitalism is also experiencing a critical moment, not because of COVID19, but because of its own contradictions. The current pandemic, as we said previously, is a trigger in a flawed atmosphere.

The pandemic has put the country into a fiscal crisis that even places the payment of salaries of public employees at risk. Economic resources are needed. Therefore, a moratorium on external debt to be declared until the country recovers its economic stability. Moreover, the big businessmen, bankers and telephone companies must give a part of their multimillion-dollar profits which they receive every year. With these measures there would be sufficient resources to face the crisis. Alongside this, urgent measures must be taken to relieve the most impoverished sectors, delivering food kits to 1,500,000 heads of families and also giving them a USD 100 bonus in March and April.

The life of the workers and the people is at stake and we defend it with solidarity.

Mass graves instead of hospitals

<http://www.pcmle.org/EM/spip.php?article10445>

Ability to recover from COVID19's is not equal under class conditions. Heads of government, ministers, businessmen and even some princes - are among the tens of thousands of their victims. But not all those affected have similar conditions to face it: class conditions show marked differences.

In Guayaquil, we Ecuadorians have a particularly painful example. The poorest patients face "isolation" without medicines in houses where overcrowding is common and access to public health centers is impossible. Without even thinking about acquiring any medicines. For them, the government does not think of building hospitals, but of digging mass graves.

The solutions to this type of problem require considering not only technical issues, but class issues. The priority of the bourgeoisie – is again demonstrated - is not to guarantee the life of the people, but to protect the integrity and growth of private capital. Not only do they seek to apply neoliberal policies, they also try to take advantage of the circumstances to negotiate inflated, higher prices for medical products.

That same bourgeoisie which fleeces the people, then presents "solidarity campaigns" to white-wash its face. The bulk of these campaigns is made up from the resources of contributions from simple people. Yet those poor people are not relieved from paying less taxes.

The government demonstrates an inability to deal with the crisis - as with the social Christian authorities of the main port. But the government also shows its attachment to the interests of the owners of private, local and foreign capital. The government decision to pay the foreign debt, cannot be explained in another way. The government ignores that what the country needs most is economic resources, and resist hearing the popular clamor that those who have more should contribute more.

Organizations like Popular Unity, Popular Front, FUT, and Conaie have formulated viable proposals so that the country can count, immediately, on economic resources. These resources would make it possible to equip the health system, attend to the health and nutrition of millions of Ecuadorians living in conditions of poverty and extreme

poverty, for whom the threat to their lives comes from two pandemics: COVID19 and the pandemic of capitalism.

<http://www.pcmle.org/EM/spip.php?article10468>

The capitalist world is unmasked

The head of the International Monetary Fund, IMF, Kristalina Georgieva, at a meeting of the World Health Organization held on April 3, made an alarming announcement: "we have never seen the world economy stop like this before ... the situation today is much worse than the 2008 financial crisis, " he said, defining the moment as " the darkest hour of humanity ... " .

The International Labor Organization, ILO, in these days has also pointed out that due to the global impact of the pandemic, the number of unemployed will grow by around 25 million people, the income of those who keep their jobs will also fall, causing an increase in poverty worldwide.

Even before the COVID19 pandemic, the world was walking towards a new economic crisis. But no doubt the virus has exploded, and there will be unforeseeable manifestations. Certainly, the economic slowdown is global.

All this has forced a world debate on what is happening on the planet. It is clear that the health systems of all countries have fallen short to face the crisis, including, of course, the most developed capitalist economies. But this sector is hardly a reflection of in society in general. The health systems - public and private - are based on the logic and nature of the capitalist state. Therefore, it is the capitalist state that is proving to be useless to meet the needs of millions of men and women.

The challenges to capitalism grow and are getting stronger. More people are more and more aware of what it means for a tiny 1% of the population to concentrate 80% of the world's wealth. They understand that this concentration of wealth in a few hands, is the reason that hundreds of thousands of people today, cannot have health care. The number of infected, deceased and corpses waiting to be buried in sidewalks and streets in Guayaquil, allows more people to understand what it means to live in poverty and extreme poverty... these are no longer just figures or concepts, they are men, women, children , girls, old people who do not have food, medicine, water.

The morals of the bourgeoisie are unveiled. They take advantage of the moment to conduct financial and commercial speculation; to steal state funds through fraudulent contracts, which they believe is the moment to execute anti-worker and anti-popular labor programs and policies. This bourgeois 'morality' is also shown by the conduct of Donald Trump. He is, regardless of the thousands killed by the pandemic in the United States, preparing interventions in Venezuela that, if executed, would also destroy the lives of Venezuelans.

The COVID19 pandemic accelerated the outbreak of a global economic crisis, but it has also accelerated the unmasking of the barbarous capitalist system.

<http://www.pcmle.org/EM/spip.php?article10462>

Guayaquil, between poverty and despair

Since February 29, 2020, when the first patient infected with COVID19 was confirmed in Ecuador, the figures for the contagion have grown alarmingly. A hitherto uncontrollable chain of transmission has claimed the lives of more than 190 people and the number of those infected continues to rise.

Despite the alerts issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) between December and January of this year, the Ecuadorian authorities preferred to dedicate their efforts and state resources to the payment of the debt. They avoided taking precautions to strengthen the health system against the pandemic. This impassive attitude of the government, is replicated in local authorities whose authoritarianism is legendary. These inactions have allowed to reach the current crisis, not having taken timely measures.

In Guayaquil the bad decisions of the municipal authority have triggered the massive contagion and the crisis in which the city finds itself. Unfortunately, this incompetence is reflected in the death of more than a hundred citizens. The successful model of the city that the Social Christians boast so much about, is nothing more than expensive propaganda. It hides the inequities and poverty in which the people live.

According to official INEC figures, Guayaquil is a city with around 2,629,022 inhabitants, with a very high poverty rate, 11.2% of the population. This implies that more than 294,000 inhabitants live on a salary of less than USD 84.82 per month, that is, they cannot satisfy the most basic health, food and housing needs. There are also figures of *extreme* poverty in the city, since almost 50,000 people must live on less than USD 42 a month. The material conditions of the people force them to live in desperation, searching day to day for work with zero security. Trying to isolate people in their homes to preserve their lives, forces them to starve because they have nothing to eat. The government does not solve the problem of food for people in informality. Add to that that the Christian Social Administration does not provide the inhabitants, especially in the suburbs, with drinking water and sewerage services. This added to the high population density here, make Guayaquil a potential focus of contagion of any disease.

For more than 28 years, the city administration has been in the hands of the negligent and corrupt right wing, which has only enriched the Christian social leaders and has imposed a model of the city in which authoritarianism, nepotism and abuse prevail. While not developing a model of sustainable growth, they have also forced the accelerating growing population to expand towards the suburbs. Given the lack of planning, the authorities clearly have no interest in taking care of that population.

Corruption is so dire in Guayaquil that even in the midst of the pandemic authorities are trying to profit from the emergency. The last scandal, the price hike for masks and hospital supplies for the IESS hospital Teodoro Maldonado Carbo, revealed how government officials and local authorities enrich themselves at the cost of the death of others.

Although all Ecuadorian provinces have cases of contagion, little has been said about the situation in Samborondón. Here the figure is of 189 contagions at publication of this

edition. This situation receives no reporting by the mainstream media, as this is where the cream and cream of the Guayaquil elite live. However, images of a party circulate on social networks, showing people from abroad who, quite possibly, imported several cases of COVID19. Yet until now, a poor migrant woman has been blamed for the contagions in the country. In reality the real culprits are in their residences, hidden and free of guilt.

Dead bodies in the streets

The situation in the country continues to create much uncertainty and anguish. In addition to the deaths of hundreds of people, both from the virus and from other diseases, hundreds of unburied bodies are left in the city of Guayaquil. Official figures contradict each other: The Minister of Health speaks of more than 1,500 deaths in public hospitals in March; while the service in charge of the removal of bodies says that there are more than 400. According to the images, the international press releases and the heartrending statements of the relatives, the tragedy is manifestly of a magnitude far greater than those presented by official figures.

The incompetent handling in the morgues has allowed corpses to be bagged, and carelessly left without conservation. People who want to recover the bodies of their relatives and bury them face an additional strong problem: the bureaucracy (based on years of paperwork, delays and poor work) ask for signatures and documents that are impossible to obtain in this emergency. That paperwork becomes so stupid, it prevents the sale of formaldehyde to embalm the bodies.

Finally, unlimited laziness and disrespect for families is shown by the municipal authorities. A few days ago, the mayor of Guayaquil spoke of mass graves, two days ago, they gave away "cardboard coffins" at the door of the Municipality. In both cases, the horror of these two actions speaks of their lack of respect for human life and for the pain of the survivors.

At press time, graveyards and hospital morgues are still dispatching corpses to family homes; hundreds of bodies are still missing and people are desperately searching for them to give them a decent burial.

Disability characterizes the Government in this tragedy

<http://www.pcmle.org/EM/spip.php?article10464>

The interests tied to imperialism and banking, and the political incapacity and the low credibility of the government, collectively have led to the Government's clumsy handling of the humanitarian crisis caused by COVID19.

The events that in Guayaquil are generated by follies of initially not taking measures to avoid crowds, allowing football matches as well as marriages of the high Guayaquil oligarchy in Samborondón. These facts, were caused and sanctioned by officials such as the Governor of Guayas, who should be removed from office.

Government spokesmen on several occasions have 'sugared' the pill when referring to the numbers of victims and sick. Nervousness is seen in the letter of introduction of the Secretary of Risks. There are contradictions in statements between the Ministry of Government, the Governor of Guayas and the Vice President of the Republic.

The criticism of government policy by the population has been very harsh and widespread. This led Romo and Roldán to develop a response, to minimize the criticism and counter-accuse of a *correista* conspiracy. But that has not stopped the complaints about the lack of medical supplies in hospitals, the lack of funeral services and the inability to comply with corpse treatment protocols.

This pressure forced Moreno to recognize that the data provided is not true and he asked for transparency from the officials. However, these are the same ones led by him. The opinion of the president questions the figures given by the Vice President and the government minister. Examples include the difference in data given by the Deputy Minister of Health and the Minister regarding the number of infected doctors and health personnel and the "false" offers for the import of masks.

The contradictions are not solely in the statistical information, the hesitancy of the governor of Guayas in asking for a 24-hour curfew. That caused citizens to take to the streets to stock up on resources, causing crowding. Moreover detected 100 patients left Guayaquil and Quito. The government has incurred gross mistakes that cost the lives of Ecuadorians. This is the demonstration of bourgeois morality.
