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Lessons From Argentina's Economic Collapse

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(Editor's note: the article that follows is a very sobering account of the effect that the collapse of the Argentine economy (1999 - 2002) had on its citizens, as seen through the eyes of one of them. The economic collapse wiped out the middle class and raised the level of poverty to 57.5%. Central to the collapse was the implementation of neo-liberal policies which enabled the swindle of billions of dollars by foreign banks and corporations. Many of Argentina's assets and resources were shamefully plundered. Its financial system was even used for money laundering by Citibank, Credit Suisse, and JP Morgan (sound familiar?). The net result was massive wealth transfers and the impoverishment of society which culminated in many deaths due to oppression and malnutrition. I am not sure the same thing is about to happen here, but I am sure that there is a distinct possibility that it might. Just food for thought - JSB)

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1. For western countries such as the UK, the first major problems of Peak Oil, assuming there are no oil shocks, will not be the shortage of oil but the economic crises that will occur. Argentina is a recent example of a country that suffered a serious economic crisis, and although Argentina and the UK are not identical, anyone interested in how economic crises can affect individual lives will be very interested in the following vivid description of life for an Argentinian following the economic collapse.

My brother visited Argentina a few weeks ago. He's been living in Spain for a few years now.

Within the first week, he got sick, some kind of strong flu, even though climate isn't that cold and he took care of himself.

Without a doubt he got sick because there are lots of new viruses in my country that can't be found in 1st world countries.

The misery and famine lead us to a situation where, even though you have food, shelter and health care, most others don't, and therefore they get sick and spread the diseases all over the region.

What got me started on this post is the fact that I actually saw this coming, and posted on the subject here at Frugal's, months before the new viruses spread over the country and the news started talking about this new, health emergency, which proves that talking, thinking and sharing ideas with like minded people (you guys), does help to see things coming and prepare for them with enough time.

So I started thinking about several issues, what I learned (either the hard way or thanks to this forum) after all these years of living in a collapsed country that is trying to get out an economical disaster and everything that comes along with it.

Though my English is limited, I hope I'm able to transmit the main ideas and concepts, giving you a better image of what you may have to deal with some day, if the economy collapses in your country.

URBAN OR COUNTRY?

Someone once asked me how did those that live in the country fare. If they were better off than city dwellers.

As always there are no simple answers. Wish I could say country good, city bad, but I can't. Because if I have to be completely honest, and I intend to be so, there are some issues that have to be analyzed, specially security.

Of course that those that live in the country and have some land and animals were better prepared food-wise. No need to have several acres full of crops. A few fruit trees, some animals, such as chickens, cows and rabbits, and a small orchard was enough to be light years ahead of those in the cities.

Chickens, eggs and rabbits would provide the proteins, a cow or two for milk and cheese, some vegetables and fruit plants covered the vegetable diet, and some eggs or a rabbit could be traded for flour to make bread and pasta or sugar and salt.

Of course that there are exceptions.

For example, some provinces up north have desert climate, and it almost never rains. It is almost impossible to live of the land, and animals require food and water you have to buy. Those guys had it bad, no wonder the northern provinces suffer the most in my country.

Those that live in cities, well they have to manage as they can. Since food prices went up about 200%-300%. People would cut expenses wherever they could so they could buy food. Some ate whatever they could, they hunted birds or ate street dogs and cats; others starved.

When it comes to food, cities suck in a crisis. It is usually the lack of food or the impossibility to acquire it that starts the rioting and looting when TSHTF. When it comes to

security things get even more complicated.

Forget about shooting those that mean you harm from 300 yards away with your MBR. Leave that notion to armchair commandos and 12 year old kids that pretend to be grown ups on the internet.

Some facts:

- 1) Those that want to harm you/steal from you don't come with a pirate flag waving over their heads.**
- 2) Neither do they start shooting at you 200 yards away.**
- 3) They wont come riding loud bikes or dressed with their orange, convict just escaped from prison jump suits, so that you can identify them the better. Nor do they all wear chains around their necks and leather jackets. If I had a dollar for each time a person that got robbed told me, "They looked like NORMAL people, dressed better than we are", honestly, I would have enough money for a nice gun. There are exceptions, but don't expect them to dress like in the movies.**
- 4) A man with a wife and two or three kids can't set up a watch. I don't care if you are SEAL, SWAT or John Freaking Rambo, no 6th sense is going to tell you that there is a guy pointing a gun at your back when you are trying to fix the water pump that just broke, or carrying a big heavy bag of dried beans you bought that morning.**

The best alarm system anyone can have in a farm are dogs. But dogs can get killed and poisoned. A friend of mine had all four dogs poisoned on his farm one night, they all died.

After all these years I learned that even though the person that lives out in the country is safer when it comes to small time robberies, that same person is more exposed to extremely violent home robberies. Criminals know that they are isolated and their feeling of invulnerability is boosted. When they assault a country home or farm, they will usually stay there for hours or days torturing the owners. I heard it all: women and children getting raped, people tied to the beds and tortured with electricity, beatings, burned with acetylene torches.

Big cities aren't much safer for the survivalist that decides to stay in the city. He will have to face express kidnappings, robberies, and pretty much risking getting shot for what's in his pockets or even his clothes.

So, where to go? The concrete jungle is dangerous and so is living away from it all, on your own.

The solution is to stay away from the cities but in groups, either by living in a small town-community or sub division, or if you have friends or family that think as you do, form your own small community.

Some may think that having neighbors within "shouting" distance means losing your privacy and freedom, but it's a price that you have to pay if you want to have someone to help you if you ever need it. To those that believe that they will never need help from anyone because they will always have their rifle at hand, checking the horizon with their scope every five minutes and a first aid kit on their back packs at all times.... Grow up

SERVICES

Whatever sort of scenario you are dealing with, services are more than likely to either suffer in quality or disappear all together. Think ahead of time, analyze possible SHTF scenarios and which service should be affected by it in your area.

Think about the most likely scenario but also think outside the box. What's more likely? A tornado? But a terrorist attack isn't as crazy as you thought it would be a few years ago, isn't it?

Also analyze the consequences of those services going down. If there is no power then you need to do something about all that meat you have in the fridge, you can dry it or can it. Think about the supplies you would need for these tasks before you actually need them.

You have a complete guide on how to prepare the meat on your computer... how will you get it out of there if there is no power? Print everything that you consider important.

WATER

No one can last too long without water. The urban survivalist may find that the water is of poor quality, in which case he can make good use of a water filter, or that there is no water available at all. When this happens, a large city where millions live will run out of bottled water within minutes.

In my case, tap water isn't very good. I can see black little particles and some other stuff that looks like dead algae. Taste isn't that bad. Not good but I know that there are parts of the country where it is much worse. To be honest, a high percentage of the country has no potable water at all.

If you can build a well, do so, set it as your top of the list priority as a survivalist. Water comes before firearms, medicines and even food.

Save as much water as you can. Use plastic bottles, refill soda bottles and place them in a cool place, preferably inside a black garbage bag to protect it from sun light. The water will pick some plastic taste after a few months, but water that tastes a little like plastic is far way better than no water at all.

Whatever the kind of SHTF scenario you are dealing with, water will suffer. In my case the economical crash created problems with the water company, that reduces the maintenance and quality in order to reduce costs and keep their income in spite of the high prices they have to pay for supplies and equipment, most of which comes from abroad, and after the 2001 crash, costs 3 times more.

As always, the little guy gets to pay for it.

Same would go for floods or chemical or biological attacks. Water requires delicate care and it will suffer when TSHTF in one way or another. In this case, when you still have tap water, a quality filter is in order, as well as a pump if you can have one. A manual pump would be ideal as well if possible.

Estimate that you need a approximately a gallon per person per day. Try to have at least two-four weeks worth of water. More would be preferable.

POWER

I spent WAY to much time without power for my own taste. Power has always been a problem in my country, even before the 2001 crisis.

The real problem starts when you spend more than just a few hours without light. Just after the SHTF in 2001 half the country went without power for 3 days.

Buenos Aires was one big dark grave. People got caught on elevators, food rot, hospitals that only had a few hours worth of fuel for their generators ran out of power.

Without power, days get to be a lot shorter. Once the sun sets there is not much you can do.

I read under candle light and flashlight light and your head starts to hurt after a while. You can work around the house a little bit but only as long as you don't need power tools.

Crime also increases once the lights go out, so whenever you have to go somewhere in a black out, carry the flashlight on one hand and a handgun on the other.

Summarizing, being in a city without light turn to be depressing after a while. I spent my share of nights, alone, listening to the radio, eating canned food and cleaning my guns under the light of my LED head lamp. Then I got married, had a son, and found out that when you have loved ones around you black outs are not as bad. The point is that family helps morale on these situations.

A note on flashlights. Have two or three head LED lights. They are not expensive and are worth their weight in gold. A powerful flashlight is necessary, something like a big Maglite or better yet a SureFire, specially when you have to check your property for intruders. But for more mundane stuff like preparing food, going to the toilet or doing stuff around the house, the LED headlamp is priceless. Try washing the dishes on the dark while holding a 60 lumen flashlight on one hand and you'll know what I mean. LEDs also have the advantage of lasting for almost an entire week of continuous use and the light bulb lasts forever.

Rechargeable batteries are a must (ed. Get a solar powered battery charger) or else you'll end up broke if lights go out often. Have a healthy amount of spare quality batteries and try to standardize as much as you can.

I have 12 Samsung NM 2500Mh AA and 8 AAA 800mh for the headlamps. I use D cell

plastic adaptors in order to use AA batteries on my 3 D cell Maglite. This turned out to work quite well, better than I expected.

I also keep about 2 or 3 packs of regular, Duracell batteries just in case. These are supposed to expire around 2012, so I can forget about them until I need them.

Rechargeable NM batteries have the disadvantage of losing power after a period of time, so keep regular batteries as well and check the rechargeable ones every once in a while.

After all these years of problems with power, what two items I would love to have?

1) The obvious. A generator. I carried my fridge food to my parents house way to many times on the past. Too bad I can't afford one right now.

2) A battery charger that has both solar panel and a small crank. They are not available here. I saw that they are relatively inexpensive in USA. Do yourself a favor and get one or two of these. Even if they don't charge as well as regular ones, I'm sure it will put out enough power to charge batteries for LED lamps at least.

GAS

Gas has decreased in quality as well, there is little gas. Try to have an electric oven in case you have to do without it.

If both electricity and gas go down, one of those camping stoves can work as well, if you keep a good supply of gas cans.

The ones that work with liquid fuel seem to be better on the long run, since they can use different types of fuel.

You can only store a limited amount of compressed gas and once you ran out of it, you are on your own if stores are closed or they sold them out.

Anyway, a city that goes without gas and light for more than two weeks is a death trap, get out of there before it's too late.

A DIFFERENT MENALITY

I was watching the People & Art channel with my wife the other night. It was a show where they film a couple for a given period of time and some people vote on who is the one with the worst habits, the one they find more annoying.

We were in our bed, and this is when I usually fall asleep but since the guy was a firearms police instructor I was interested and managed to stay awake.

At one point the guy's wife said that she found annoying that her husband spent 500 dollars a month on beauty products for himself. 500 USD on facial cream, special shampoo and conditioner, as well as having his nails polished! If you are that guy and happen to be reading this, or if you know him, I'm sorry, but what an idiot!!

"500 USD, that's a small generator or a gun and a few boxes of ammo" I told my wife.

"That's two months worth of food" she said.

We were each thinking of a practical use for that money, the money this guy was practically throwing away.

Once the SHTF, money is no longer measured in money, but you start seeing it as the necessary goods it can buy. Stuff like food, medicine, gas, or the private medical service bill.

To me, spending 500 dollars on beauty products, and to make it worse, on a guy? That's simply not acceptable.

The way I see it, someone with that mentality can't survive a week without a credit card, no use in even considering a SHTF scenario. And this guy is a firearms instructor?... probably the kind of guy that will say that a handgun is only used to fight his way to his rifle... and his facial night cream...

Once you experience the lack of stuff you took for granted, like food, medicines, your set of priorities change all of a sudden. For example, I had two wisdom teeth removed last year. On both occasions I was prescribed with antibiotics and strong Ibuprofen for the pain. I took the antibiotics (though I did buy two boxes with the same recipe just to keep one box just in case) but I didn't use the Ibuprofen, I added it to my pile of medicines.

Why? because medicines are not always available and I'm not sure if they will be available in the future. Sure, it hurt like hell, but pain alone isn't going to kill you, so I sucked it up. Good for building up character if you ask me. Make sacrifices so as to ensure a better future, that's the mentality you should have if you want to be prepared. There's stuff that is "nice to have" that has to be sacrificed to get the indispensable stuff.

There's stuff that is not "basic need stuff" but it's also important in one way or another.

My wife goes to the hairdresser once every month or two. It's not life or death, but it does make her feel better and it boosts her morale. I buy a game for the Xbox or a movie to watch with my wife every once in a while, just to relax. 7 or 10 dollars a month are not going to burn a hole in my pocket.

Addictions such as alcohol, drugs or even cigarettes should be avoided by the survivalist. They are bad for your health, cost a lot of money that could be much better spent, and create an addiction to something that may not be available in the future.

Who will have to tolerate your grouchy mood when your brand of smokes is no longer imported after TSHTF?

GRAY/BLACK MARKET

Once the SHTF the black/gray market will take no time to appear all around you.

In my country, gray markets were even accepted in the end. At first it was all about trading skills or craft products for food. Districts and towns would form their own barter markets, and created their own tickets, similar to money, that was used to trade.

This didn't last long. Those tickets were easy to make on your home computer, there was no control and eventually people went back to paper money.

These markets were usually placed on warehouses or empty land, and were managed by some wise guy and a few thugs or hired security.

Anyone can go rent a kiosk inside these markets for about 50-100 pesos (about 20-30 dollars) a day and sell his goods and services.

Piece within these markets is usually respected... lets just say that these managers don't call the police if someone tries anything funny, like stealing, fighting or taking advantage of women. That's not good for their business and anyone that tries to mess with their business finds out how much pain the human body can actually experiment or gets a free ticket to meet the Lord.

Sometimes even uniformed cops manage security on these markets, for a small fee of course. As always, you still have to be careful. They may still try to pick your pockets or even attack you once you leave the market. Once you leave the market, you are on your own, as always.

This market evolves, and now a lot of different products are available. Today I visited my local market, a warehouse that is fairly well set up and cleanly managed. They had problems for selling stolen merchandise and fake Brand name clothes a few days ago.

What can be found at a local markets? Mostly food and clothing. Some have more variety than others but cheese, canned food, spices, honey, eggs, fruits, vegetables, beer, wine and cured meat are generally available, same as bakery products and pasta. These are less expensive than those found at supermarkets. Fresh fish is sometimes available but not always, people don't trust much products that need refrigeration, and they get those at supermarkets instead.

Clothes are also popular and you can find copies of brand name clothes, imitations, or even original stolen new clothes, the same goes for shoes and snickers. Children clothes, underwear, socks, sheets and towels are all very popular. Some sell toys, but they are always China made, mostly poor quality though there are some few exceptions.

Others sell tools, also made in China can be found as well, but they are of poor quality.

Some offer their services and repair stuff or offer work as handyman.

You would be amazed of the junk that these guys manage to fix: TVs, CD players, Power tools, etc. They even manage to solder the small integrated circuits boards sometimes. Give one of these guys a screw driver and a bar of chocolate and he will fix a nuclear submarine.

After food and clothes, the 3rd most popular item has to be CDs and DVDs, movies, music,

play station 2 and Xbox games, programs, it all ends up there just one or two days after the official release in USA. Seems that they have a guy hidden under Bill Gate's desk or something.

Anyway, almost everything can be found there, and if you want, you can ask around, talk to the right guy and buy illegal stuff like drugs or black market guns and ammo. The quality of the drugs is questionable, of course, and a lot of addicts die from the mixtures these guys sell. Guns are mostly FM High Powers, Surplus 1911s and Colt .45s, Sistemas, and old Colt Detective revolvers in 38 special that found their way from police and military armories into the black market. Condition isn't very good but if you have money you'll be amazed of what you can end up with. Everything that is used by the military and police, including SMGs a, Browning 50 BMG Machine guns, and even frag grenades, is available in the black market, if the customer has the amount of money and a little patience, of course. The big guns may take a while, but the handguns and grenades are readily available.

Part Two

1. GOLD:

Someone hit me in the head please because I messed up about the gold issue.

Everyone wants to buy gold! "I buy gold. Pay cash" signs are everywhere, even on TV! I can't believe I'm that silly!

I just didn't relate it to what I read here because they deal with junk gold, like jewelry, either stolen or sold because they needed the money, not the gold coins that you guys talk about. No one pays for the true value of the stuff, so big WARNING! Sign on people that are buying gold coins.

Since it is impossible to determine the true mineral percentage of gold, small shops and dealers will pay for it as regular jewelry gold.

What I would do if I were you: Besides gold coins, buy a lot of small gold rings and other jewelry. They should be less expensive than gold coins, and if the SHTF bad, you'll not be losing money, selling premium quality gold coins for the price of junk gold. If I could travel back in time, I'd buy a small bag worth of gold rings.

Small time thieves will snatch gold chains right out of your neck and sell them at these small dealers found everywhere. This is VERY common at train stations, subways and other crowded areas.

So, my advice, if you are preparing for a small economical crisis, gold coins make sense. You will keep the value of the stuff and be able to sell it for its actual cost to gold dealers or maybe other survivalists that know the true value of the item.

In my case, gold coins would have been an excellent investment, saving me from loosing money when the local economy crashed. Even though things are bad, I can go to a bank down town and get paid for what a gold coin is truly worth, same goes for pure silver. But

where I live, in my local area small time dealers will only pay you the value of junk gold, no matter what kind of gold you have. So, I'd have to say that if TSHTF bad, gold jewelry is a better trade item than gold coins.

GUNS, AMMO AND OTHER GEAR

After TSHTF in 2001, only the most narrow minded, brain washed, butterfly IQ level idiots believed that the police would protect them from the crime wave that followed the collapse of our economy.

A lot of people that could have been considered antigun before, ran to the gun shops, seeking advice on how to defend themselves and their families. They would buy a 38 revolver, a box of ammo, and leave it in the closet, probably believing that it would magically protect them from intruders.

Oh, maybe you don't think that firearms are really necessary or your beliefs do not allow you to buy a tool designed to kill people. So you probably ask yourself, is a gun really necessary when TSHTF? Will it truly make a difference?

Having gone through a shtf scenario myself, total economical collapse in the year 2001, and still dealing with the consequences, 5 years later, I feel I can answer that question.

YES, you need a gun, pepper spray, a machete, a battle axe, club with a rusty nail sticking out of it, or whatever weapon you can get hold of.

A LOT has been written on survival weapons. Everyone that is into armed survival has his or her own idea of the ideal gun battery. Some more oriented to a hunting point of view, others only as self defense means and others consider a little of both, and look for general purpose weapons.

Talking about guns, there is one special subject I want to rectify, and it's the point on what's the primary weapon for the survivalist, specially a urban survivalist that has to function in a society, yes, even after the SHTF.

People, if you are interested in real world SHTF situation, and you want to be prepared for the real deal, then understand that this isn't black or white.

You wake up one day and listen on the radio that the economy collapsed and that the stock market closed indefinitely.

CRIME AND INSECURITY

Even though crime has always been an issue in South America, my country was quite the exception. It was dangerous, yes but nothing like after the 2001 economical crisis. One used to be able to let kids play on the sidewalk, or walk back home from a party, a few blocks, and be somewhat safe. This all changed now. There are no kids playing on the sidewalks anymore. I should emphasize this a little more. There are absolutely NO kids playing on the sidewalks at all, at any time of the day. Maybe a kid rides his bike a few meters on the sidewalk, but always under the supervision of an adult. A kid riding a bike on

his own will get that bike stolen in no time, probably get hurt in the process, therefore no responsible parent leaves a kid alone on the street. Teenagers present a greater problem. You can't keep a 15 or 16 year old inside a house all day long, and even though they are big enough to go out on their own, when the sun goes down things get much worse.

This is when parents organize themselves; either taking them to someone's house or to a club and picking them up at a certain time. Taxis and remises are used sometimes, but there have been lots of cases of girls getting raped, so no parent worth a buck leaves his son or daughter in hands of a stranger. After years of living like this, almost everyone learned to be careful; sometimes they had to learn the hard way. Practically no one leaves a door or window opened or unlocked. Nor do they hang out in front of the house talking to friends. A bad guy might just see you there, like a sitting duck, pull a gun on you and take you inside your house.

There are no "bandit's law" anymore. One used to hear people talk about "You shouldn't resist a robbery, give them what they want and they'll go away". That holds true no more. These guys are under the influence of drugs, epoxy glue, or just hate your guts so much, because you have a better life than they ever dreamed of, because they were abused since the day they were born, that they will hurt and humiliate you as much as they can. Letting a criminal inside your house almost guarantees you that he will rape/beat/ torture and abuse whoever they find inside.

I personally drew a line a few years ago and decided, after one long, serious conversation with my wife; that no one would be allowed inside the house, no matter what. We figured that there are worse things than death. Having decided that, I make sure I always have a weapon on me. They'll have to pay dearly for my life, plus interests.

By far, the most dangerous moment of the day, is when I (or my wife) leave/enter my house. A solid, secure house cannot be broken in easily, so criminals wait until you are standing on front of the door with the keys on your hand to jump on you. This is why we are extra alert when approaching our house, look all around us and if we see anything strange, keep walking around the block or keep on driving. No door is ever opened when there is a strange person around. Whenever someone knocks on our door (and we don't know him/her), they are answered from a second story window. Criminals sometimes disguise as electric company guys or something like that, saying that they have to fix something. NO! If there is something to be fixed they can fix it on the sidewalk. Anything inside your house is your responsibility and the company is not going to fix it for you. Either way, it's always better to play it safe, Better to be rude than dead.

On the car/driving issue, that calls for an entire post dedicated to SHTF driving. For now I'll just say that windows and doors have to be closed at all times, a weapon must be within arms reach, and that stop signs and traffic lights have a hole new meaning once TSHTF. If your country ever falls as mine did, you'll remember me whenever you see a traffic light. You never stop at a red lights or stop sign unless there is traffic, especially at night.

At first, police would write you a ticket for not stopping at a red light if they saw you (another way of saying that they will ask for a bribe if they see you pass a red light), but after a few

months they realized that nothing could be done, people would rather risk a ticket than risking their lives, so they decided to turn traffic lights to permanent yellow at night, after 8 or 9 PM. This is, of course, very dangerous. Night car accidents are both frequent and brutal since sometimes both cars hit each other at full speed.

MissinLink asked some good questions that might interest others as well, and since we are on the security issue, here they are:

"Do the invaders of homes in the country just drive up in cars or trucks? Do they hide and sneak up? How do these home invaders attack a home in the country? A similar question could be asked for homes in the city."

Sometimes they just drive up to where you are working, if you are far away from the home, but most of the time they sneak up on you. Criminals are not stupid, and they will spend days checking the place and specially YOUR ROUTINE. For example, if they see that you lock the gate at night, as most do, they will wait for you behind a tree until you are close. This is done a lot. Dogs are the best alarm you can find, and criminals know that. They will poison them with pills when you go to sleep and attack the place in the middle of the night. I know of many that had their dogs killed. If they think that security is tight, they will just hide near the main gate, and wait for you to leave or return. When you stop at the gate and must get out of the truck to open/close the main gate, they attack. I'd say that the most frequent kind of attack is attacking by surprise when you enter/leave your home.

"Most common times of attack? Day night evening morning? I understand occur when coming or going from ones home, etc."

7 am, 9 am, 1pm 7pm, all are common times for attacks. There is no "safe" hour of the day. Night is particularly dangerous. Maybe attacks during the day are faster, they want to get some money or jewelry and leave fast, while at night they might stay inside more time, maybe till the next day. But there are no fixed patterns. If I could give one advice concerning SHTF security, it would be: Eyes and ears wide open when you enter/leave your home. If possible, keep a gun on your hand when doing either one. If something looks, even "feels" strange, then go around the block and check again, carefully. If you see them still there, either call the police (if still available) or get help. If you approach the house with a large number of people they will leave. One time, I saw a couple of strange looking guys at my door. I went round the block and saw them still there. I started flashing the car lights and the horn and they left. I had a gun with me, though, so be careful when trying this. Also, remember that a car is one heavy, powerful piece of machinery. I know a guy that had one of those big chrome-tube bumpers installed on his truck, especially for hitting those that were stupid enough to try and make him stop by standing in front of the car.

If I had a truck, I would do so myself. Though I would keep my mouth shut about it, as always. Just say that you think it looks cool or something. Every now and then someone tries to force me to stop my car by standing in front of it (I suppose there are still fools out there that get robbed this way), in the middle of the street. I just aim at them and accelerate at full speed. They always jump out of the way before I hit them. By the way, at first, doing this made me feel nervous, but can you believe that now it's just common driving, as normal

as changing gears? I guess it's a little sad.

Studying the SHTF at the University: Dark omens:

1. I forgot it! Darn, same as the gold stuff but worse, much worse. I've never been good at remembering some things, like numbers and names of people I meet, I forget those (instantly), they just flee my mind, uneventfully, but I do remember some other things that don't seem to be as important. I do remember living in USA as a kid. I remember my school, Pierce School, Don't remember exactly where it was, because we lived some in Boston, Massachusetts and some in New Hampshire. I remember my best friend, Freddy, and a girl (why is there always a girl?) Samantha, Sam. She was red haired and tall, I had a picture of her playing together but I lost it. Some time between the age of 3 and 26 I lost that picture that was so dear to me. I remember the smell of an orange shaped "scratch and smell" sticker my kindergarten teacher stuck in a small book we made once. But I almost forgot this forever. This, this was important, a moment where the life we once knew stopped existing, and a group of students, in a class room that looked like an abandoned building, realized it, all 60 of us at the same time.

It's 1:06 AM over here. I just finished showering and my wife and son are asleep. I was putting shampoo on my hair, thinking about what I wrote today on this post, and remembered the exact moment when I realized along with several other people, not only that TSHTF (that we all knew) but that the world we once knew no longer existed, and that this was not a hurricane, this was an ice age period, it wouldn't just go away.

We understood it the same way a kid understands photosynthesis: Because a teacher coldly explained it to us, even used graphics. I slept 5 hours yesterday, 2 hours the day before yesterday. Saturday night I didn't sleep at all. I'm already used to it. Deadlines at the University, staying late at night, drawing in CAD 3D, waiting until Renders are ready. It's a competitive world out there, and no one sympathizes with what you are going through, they just want you to perform as expected, and the standard is always high. It happened 4 years ago, almost a year after the December 2001 crisis. It was a social studies class and this teacher, don't remember if it was a he or a she, was explaining the different kinds of social pyramids. God! Now I remember more! We even had a text book with those darn, cruel pyramids! The first pyramid explained the basic society. A pyramid with two horizontal lines, dividing those on top (high social class) those in the middle (middle class) and the bottom of the pyramid (the poor, proletarian). The teacher explained that the middle of the pyramid, the middle class, acted as a cushion between the rich and the poor, taking care of the social stress. The second pyramid had a big middle section, this was the pyramid that represents 1st world countries. In which the bottom is very thin and arrows show that there is a possibility to go from low to middle class, and from middle to the top of the social pyramid. Our teacher explained that this was the classic, democratic capitalist society, and that on countries such as Europe's one, socialists, the pyramid was very similar but a little more flat, meaning that here is a big middle section, middle class, and small high and low class. There is little difference between the three of them.

The third pyramid showed the communist society. Where arrows from the low and middle

class tried to reach the top but they bounced off the line. A small high society and one big low society, cushioned by a minimal middle class section of pyramid. Then we turned the page and saw the darned fourth pyramid. This one had arrows from the middle class dropping to the low, poor class.

"What is this?" Some of us asked.

The teacher looked at us. "This is us"

"It's the collapsed country, a country that turns into 3rd world country like in pyramid five where there is almost no middle class to speak, one huge low, poor class, and a very small, very rich, top class."

"What are those arrows that go from the middle to the bottom of the pyramid?" Someone asked.

You could hear a pin drop. "That is middle class turning into poor".

I won't lie, no one cried, though people rubbed their faces, held their heads and their breath.

No one cried, but we all knew at that very moment that all we thought, all we took for granted, simply was not going to happen.

"You see, the income from the middle class is not enough to function as middle class any more. Some from the top class fall to middle class, but the vast majority of the middle class turns into poor" Said the teacher.

I don't know how many people in that room suddenly understood that he/she was poor.

The teacher continued "You see, we have a middle class that suddenly turns to poor, creating a society of basically poor people, there is no more middle class to cushion tensions any more. Middle class suddenly discovers that they are overqualified for the jobs they can find and have to settle for anything they can obtain, there for unemployment sky rockets, too much to offer, too little demand. You see they prepare, study for a job they are not going to get. You kids, you are studying Architecture because you simply wish to do so. Only 3 or 4 percent of you will actually find a job related to architecture."

We all sat there, letting it all sink in. After a few months, it all proved to be true. Even the amount of students that dropped out of college increased to at least 50%. They either so no point in studying something that would not make much of a difference in their future salaries, had no money to keep themselves in college, or simply had to drop college to work and support their families.

Someone once said, in this forum, that if this had happened in USA, the social unrest would have been much worse, because people from S. America are stronger. At first, I told him that I didn't think so, I said that all humans adapt when they have no other choice. But now that I consider it more, maybe he was right. Not that S. Americans are stronger, but they are more used to adversities. Most of us are children from grandparents that escaped civil war, either in Spain or dictators in Italy, our parents survived the dirty war, even more dictators,

and therefore their children are of strong character too. Can USA citizens survive what we survived? Of course they can, though I think that there are too many that are not like you, many that don't prepare, and take everything for granted. Those are the ones that will be responsible for the increase in the social unrest once the SHTF, those that were too lazy to take care of themselves before the SHTF, or that had gone soft through out the years, believing that the government will "take care of them because they pay their taxes". But in the end, they will pull through. People will adapt, they always do. You'd be surprised. And those that don't want to adapt to the new reality they live in, will die young, thus cleaning the gene pool and ensuring the continuity of the specie. It's been this way for thousands of years.

MISCELLANEOUS Q&A

Don't prepare for an idiot shooting a Raven at you 200 yards away, prepare for the sneaky son of a gun that waits until you are distracted, fed the dogs some nice pills, and gets to you when you less expect him. THAT is much more likely than someone attacking you 200 yards away.

I didn't mean it as an insult to anyone, I'm well aware that there are cases of people shooting enemies 1000 yards away. That is war. Killing someone that wants you dead before he gets close to you is perfectly logical.

Please name me one case of self defense where the person shot the bad guy 100 yards away.

I had a guy try to steal my car a while ago while visiting a friend at his farm.

I saw the guy next to my car about 300 meters away. I had my FAL PARA with me, since we where going to spend some time shooting that morning.

I could have shot that guy from a safe distance, right? But you can't do that in real life. People that shoot others 300 meters away for no reason, claiming self defense, are called psychos. I had to fold my rifle, hide it under my coat, walk to where my car and the guy where, and ask him what he wanted. When he said that he was there to take the car I leveled my FAL at him, and as it usually happens in real life, the guy almost pissed his pants, and left, babbling some BS story I no longer remember.

If someone starts shooting at you 300 yards away, and you shoot back in self defense , that's ok, but that rarely, if ever, happens.

Any bad guy that has survived through puberty will be smart enough to get close, very close, maybe when you are distracted with some chore/fieldwork and point a gun at you, asking you to calm down and walk into the house.

No way can you know what a man's intentions are 200 yards away, unless he starts shooting at you like an idiot. And if he wants you dead that bad, he will get close enough and make sure that that one shot is the last thing you hear on this planet.

As I said, dogs are the best alarm on the field, though those too can be eliminated, as it

happened to my friend. A shame by the way, they were nice dogs.

But if your idea of a self defense plan is shooting anyone that happens to be within your 200 yard range, do as you wish. You will not have to worry much about survival, State penitentiary will provide all you need.

It is one thing to go to war, and it is another, completely different, to live your life in a SHTF situation. When you deploy in a war zone, you set yourself mentally to do a job, when the job is done, you return home, you turn the mental combat switch off.

You cannot live your entire life as if you were in combat, it's impossible.

I'm as alert as I can be, all day long, and all night. Thanks to that I kept my family and myself safe, while everyone else I know has at least been involved in one or more violent crimes. I'm so winded up that the slightest sound will make jump out of bed at night and have my pistol ready even before I'm conscious of what I'm doing.

My house is the only one in the block that has not been broken into, my wife and son are safe, safer than all the other stupid sheep that blame God for whatever happens to them, and do nothing to prevent it themselves.

But still, you have to live your life, go to work, go to the supermarket... live a life! do everyday stuff.

The stress of living that way will be the end of you, I'm 26 years old and already have problems related to high stress like high blood pressure, migraines, insomnia, etc.
NSA

"You make it sound like carrying a pistol on your person is a fairly common occurrence (at least now)."

My mistake, it is not common, at least for descent working people. There are parts where criminals carry their guns openly, sticking out of their joggings and no one does anything about it. No one dares mess with them, these are neighborhoods where police don't dare to enter.

Carrying a handgun, ready for use (loaded and on your person) is illegal, unless you have a permit that is almost impossible to get. You need to own a large company, and justify carrying the gun because you transport large amounts of money (several thousands of USD on daily basis). Carrying a gun for self defense is not a reason for a carry permit, only the protection of money. It's ridiculous, isn't it?

Still, owning handguns is not that complicated, once you get a gun user card, but a ccw permit card is out of the question.

Some gun users still choose to carry guns, even though they don't have a carry permit. This is not allowed and you might lose your gun user card for this.

Carrying a gun, bought in the black market, and without even having a gun user card, will

take you straight to jail.

On the issue of cops and guns, some may understand that you are carrying for self defense, because you are in a very dangerous area, and if you have you gun user card that shows that you bought that gun legally, he MAY be sensitive and let you go, or not.

More than likely, he will ask for a small "tip", for his troubles. It's a matter of luck actually. You have to consider all this, and decide if the risk of getting caught is greater than the risk of getting killed for not being able to defend yourself.

We often call unprepared people, the mass, sheep. Sheep describes them pretty well. They do as the rest of them do, don't fight for their rights, accept almost everything and so on. But what happens when "sheep" get desperate? Well, that 's what happened here.

After years of closing factories and the destruction of the national industry, extremely low wages, people got fed up. This destructive economy by Menem, our previous president, one of the most corrupt president in the history, (he was into the bombing of the jew embassy, managed the drug market in the country, just to mention some) plus the stupidity of the following president, De la RÃ³a, was a formula for disaster.

One day the Minister of Economy declared that no one would be able to get more than 100 bucks a day from the ATM(correct?) nor close accounts. You could just get 100 bucks out of the bank a day. That was it.

Then came the devaluation. Before this happened 1 U\$\$= 1 \$ Argentine peso. Suddenly this changed into 1 U\$\$ dollar= 2 peso then 2.5 even 4 pesos. Today 1U\$\$= 3 Pesos.

The banks kept the people's money, including their deposits in US dollars. If you had 1000 U\$\$ dollars in Bank Boston for example, they turned it into 1000 pesos, that equaled 333 U\$\$ dollars. They stole 666 dollars from you!

Prices went up 200%, 300% and sometimes more. Imagine for one moment what your life would be like if today you go to your local 7-11 and everything has gone up 200%. How would you survive with your pay check?

The sheep got desperate. First, because they had been stolen by banks and wouldn't return the money to the people.(the so called "corralito") then because the classes with the lowest income found out that their salaries weren't high enough to buy the minimum food stuff to survive. The country marched asking for the presidents resignation. He had to leave the presidential palace in a chopper...

Banks were destroyed by people that wanted their hard earned money back. Supermarkets and other shops were looted, as well as regular houses.

This lasted for about a month, the chaos spread all over the country, concentrated in the largest cities.

I remember being at a supermarket and the mob outside, negotiating with the manager. Sometimes, they would not destroy the place if the supermarket surrendered them the

goods peacefully.

Food got scarce. I mean, you could buy just a certain amount of milk or water, 4 bottles for example. And most imported goods disappeared. Electro domestics such as TV, videos, and refrigerators kept their prices in dollars, inaccessible for most people. The same happened with real estates, cars and luxury goods.

Today this all seems far away. Not because it got better, but because us humans have this damn capacity to " get used to".

How did our lives change? I cant even being to explain... everything changed!

The streets are more dangerous than ever, thanks to the general poverty.

Education suffered thanks to this as well. Kids working or stealing to survive instead of going to school.

How could I explain this to you?....

For example, tools are really expensive, since most come from abroad... remember, our national industry was sold out or destroyed.

Stuff like MRE, Emergency food bars are impossible to get. No one imports them anymore. (I paid 10 dollars for 1 MRE a guy had)

Guns and ammo are really expensive and are sold in small quantities.

Forget about buying a "case" of ammo! Forget it! I know it's hard for some of you to imagine this, but you just can't buy a " case" of anything. A large store may have 10 or 15 boxes of 308, 20 rounds each box. Small stores have 10. or less.

Only common ammo is available such as 22, 38, 357. 9mm, some 40 s&w, 12 ga 308 and a little 223, that's pretty much it. Ammo for my 357 sig is hard to get. I buy a box of it every time I find one around... and it's extremely expensive.

IF you just HAVE to buy something strange like 300 magnum or 270 (strange for us J) there's one place you can get them from but be prepared to pay +100 dollars for 20 rounds. While we are at it, there are also few models of guns, 70 % of it is used. You can find about 4 or 5 12 ga pumps, mossberg 500, Maverick or Rem 870 in each store. Handguns are relatively plentiful, not the newest models but still there's some Beretta, Glock, Colt, S&W, Walther, Taurus, Rossi and Sig. Same goes for Mausers and bolt action rifles as well as side by side shotguns.

Semi auto rifles are hard to get. Some big gun shops have 1 FAL each. M16 are quite rare and expensive. Saw a Galil and a SKS(600 dollars) the other day, but it's not common and the red tape is HUGE. I found a good FMK3, one of the few left around, and bought it for 250 dollars, but this isn't common.

Shoes and clothes are also, expensive, even in U\$. Labor is cheep; you can have a maid and a gardener for 300 dollars. There's no "safe" job. With 20% unemployment they pay

you whatever they want and if you don't like it there are 100 persons waiting to get your job. Owning a shop-business is hard. You have to consider armed robbery (some get hit 10 times a month) and still you have to pay the police for protection (from themselves) Hope it helps, at least so you can have an idea how your world would be if this happened in your country, hope you never have to experience it in the flesh...

Well, one thing I learned with all this is that people adapt, people get "used to".

And finally, people accept.

I have a hard time seeing people eat out of trash cans, that's one thing I'll never get used to. Every night entire families, wife, husband and 2 or 3 kids, little kids about 3 years old go throw trash cans in search of food.

At almost every light stop there's little bare foot kids begging, all dirty and skinny.

That's the thing that affected me most, the starving children.

One guy in another board told me he didn't care for this "bleeding Heart thing" and that "Life is rough. Get used to it." I told him that I didn't need someone that lives in San Diego, California, explain me how rough life is.

I've seen dead people, man, I once saw a guy "sew" his mouth shut with a piece of rusted wire he got out of a broom, and all that I can handle, but a 3 year old sobbing because he's starving, Im sorry, I can't.

Believe me, it's one thing to see a little kid starving in Africa, you probably saw that terrible image a million times, but now imagine that that kid speaks English, with an American accent, and you see the Hollywood sign in the background.

Both cases are terrible, but the one that looks as if he could be your son and not some kid in Africa or Croatia hits a nerve. Because "those things don't happen here". It happens to others, not in my country, not in my neck of the woods.

Sorry , Im babbling here. Back to your question:

You guys have most stuff covered, but there's some stuff I'd like to share:

- 1) Don't invest all your money in your country. Don't put all your eggs in the same basket, just in case economy goes to hell. Invest in a country in Europe, in Australia, whatever, I don't know, but not in the same place. I did this, but most people didn't and got screwed.

- 2) Keep cash. Both dollars and Euros. I know some of you just don't like the European money, but it's the only way you have to cover most bases. Here the national paper money was worth 1/3 from one day to another.

- 3) If you have land, have some animals. Even a few chickens and rabbits can make a huge difference and will complement your staple food.

4) Buy guns and ammo. Not 20, but a couple of fighting guns, 1 or 2 Mausers and 2 or 3 handguns. You know the kind. Get lots of 22 ammo.

5) Try to get 2 or 3 similar guns, like 2 or 3 AR, Fals, or SKS. This way you can use the same ammo and if 2 guns brake you may be able to fix 1. For example, If I were you, Id buy 3 or 4 SKS and 3000 rounds of ammo. If your SKS brakes, you have a spare gun that you already know how it works and are used to.

6) Spare parts are ok, but make sure you know how to replace them, a gunsmith may not be available. If not, get a similar gun as back up.

7) Don't trust the media. If you watch the news here, reporters say everything is ok, everything is fine. But then you talk to your neighbor and it turns out Mr. X got shot yesterday, the nice girl on the next block got kidnapped and raped, and today the boy next door was also kidnapped. This is the kind of conversations I have in my neighborhood, I'm not kidding.

8) Keep 6 months- a year worth of food stored if you can and have a well or at least a good supply of bottled water stored as well a 2 water purifier and a good supply of filters for them. The water network works but it's not safe. Some time ago an entire town got sick because of the contaminated tap water and lots of people died.

9) B-proof vest. I'd sell my left testicle for one these days. I never believed I would ever need one and now here I am. Get one of those that can go under the regular clothes.

10) Keep your passport and cash ready. If you can afford it, the best thing to do in such a country is getting the hell out of it! Maybe you have family somewhere else, keep in touch just in case. I did with my family in Spain and I going there as soon as I can.

"What about essential services like power and water?"

Power get cut some times but not for long , a couple of flash lights and your ok.
Water is still working but you cant drink. Most of the water supply in Bs As shouldn't be drank, I used to drink it but this year the water was just too dirty. Even if we still pay our water bill and the gov. says it's ok for drinking this water wouldn't be accepted in the US. Here the water companies can bribe their way out of it.

"Were they always delivered reliably or were there blackouts etc...."

There were blackouts, I remember once most of the country was without light for about a day. Buenos Aires was without light for 4 days.

"What about medical care, how do people get treated for injuries or illnesses? "

If you have private health you are ok, but if you don't have the money for it you might as well put a bullet in your head. Free hospitalization, forget it, you'll die because of an infection. They don't have supplies, even sterile needles are hard to get in a public hospital. No way, if

you don't have private health you have a foot in your grave already.

"Is the crime mostly simple street crime or is it highly organized with gangs and cartels/mafia style?"

Both. The police handles most organized crime. The governors are the head of the organizations on each Province. The worst part is the kidnapping. About 2 or 3 persons get kidnapped each day in my neighborhood.

For example, I keep 10 pesos (about 3 dollars) bills to give to the police if I get stopped when driving. You HAVE to bribe the cop that stops you, the last time I got stopped by a couple of cops I played a little hard to get (pretended I didn't understand he wanted money) the cop got really nervous so I just gave him the money and he calmed down, he let me go.

The cops are involved in most illegal activities like drugs, prostitution, robbery and kidnaps.

That's why I keep the high power Hirtemberg 9mm stuff and AP 308, because there a big chance the "perp" might be wearing a "Policia Federal" body armor vest.

They ask for donations. That's right, the government asks the people for donations instead of doing things themselves.

And the best part is that once they get all the donations.(mostly food, milk, blankets and such) The damn Governors SELL the donated goods to the poor. No , you cant imagine the kind of corruption we have here.

The problem is that nothing is being done to get us on the right track, because a small group of people wants this country as poor as possible to take advantage of it.

Imagine having to pay your employees 1 dollar a day and selling the soya, meat and other agricultural products you get at international prices.

The people that own small portions of land have it worse than those professionals that are in the city. This is because they are destroyed by the larger land owners such as Benetton and other large international corporations.

But you are right, they can at least live out of their land. The poor people in cities have to collect cardboard or look in the garbage.

You are also right about people now fixing things instead of buying new ones. Seems as handyman will always find a way to survive.

The only things that can be imported are the cheap ones from China, or Brasil. Other products like large plasma TVs and such are rare and only accessible to the extremely wealthy.

For example, I had to buy a electric shaver because the Gillette blade are too expensive. No way am I going to spend 6 dollars for a pack of Gillette Sensor.

And so you adapt to whats available and what you can afford.

people that live in the Patagonia are a little better off than those that live in other Provinces. The rich people do well everywhere (except for the kidnaps and murder) but the poor people that live in the south have better land and can at least grow and raise a few animals. The central part of Argentina, and the North has been severely punished. Tucum n is a disaster, as well as Chaco, Entre Rios, and others, the amount of children that starve to death is astonishing.

The Chileans returned to Chile long ago, Chile is MUCH better off. Argentineans are going to Chile looking for job.

Buenos Aires is also a disaster area. Even the "nice part" of Buenos Aires, the Capital where the nice Hotels are, the part that tourists see, turns into a complete nightmare after 10 pm.

During the day tourist from around the world shop and sight see, ignoring the beggars. But at night the picture is Mad Max 4:

All the "cartoneros", people that pull carts in search of cardboard and paper to sell, flood the city. And I mean flood: 20 to 30 persons per block.

They pull the carts themselves, followed by the wife and a few children. They pick the paper out of the trashcans and eat whatever they scavenge.

The government considers them "employees" God only knows why, since they have no salaries, just the paper they get. This is just another "trick" the government has to reduce the unemployment %, considering these poor people that eat out of trashcans employed. (Our politicians have no shame)

As I write this I hear shoots being fired outside and people screaming.. jjejee, I never would have think that I would be writing this today, 3 years ago, but now it's almost normal.

Gold & silver kept their true value, as they always do. I didn't have gold, but had dollars and euros. Now that you mention it gold might be a good way to go for the Americans. Dollars, Euros and gold and you'd have most bases covered.

You can't barter gold at a supermarket for example, you would loose too much money. But you can wait until things settle and change for dollars/Euros or other stable paper money and save yourself from devaluation. Or get out of dodge with your gold and deposit it in a safe country.

The point is that gold never loses it's value because, unlike paper money, it holds value itself.

Foreign accounts could not be touched since they are protected by other countries law, not affected by national executive orders.

Imagine a federal agent calling a Suzie Bank.

"Hi, I'd like to seize Mr. Smiths accounts"

"Why?"

"Well, because I want to steal his money"...

Wouldn't work.

Part Four

A LIST OF THINGS THAT "If you had it to do over again" YOU WOULD GET.

Nomad came up with this one. It's a good idea because it may help some of you from making the same mistakes I did. There are things you don't think about until you need them, and then it's too late.

OK, If I had to do all this from scratch? Say, for example, if I had a 2 year warning, fairy godmother appears one night, all dressed in blue waving a magic wand, saying "Your country will go down the sewer in 2 years, consider yourself warned dear"

There are several things I would have done differently, and things I would have bought:
Food: I'll get to the food issue soon enough, but you can never have too much canned, or other long shelf life food. This was probably one of my greatest mistakes, I overlooked the food problem.

I was talking to my wife today while driving, asked her the same question Nomad asked me "what would you do if you could go back in time, before the 2001 crisis".

My wife, though smart, isn't much into preparedness, but she answered "I'd buy food" in a heartbeat.

"Don't you remember that you could only buy one small bottle of oil at a time, same with sugar, flour and milk. Don't you remember all those empty shelves at the supermarket.?"

Definitely, more food, specially food that lasts for a few years.

CAR

I would have bought a 4x4, even though I live in the city. A 4x4 allows you to drive over the sidewalk or through wasteland, away from roadblocks or riots. I've seen those that have 4x4s simply go off road, climb over a boulevard and leave while the rest of us poor car owners have to stay.

A 4x4 truck also has more mass and power in case that someone tries to cut you off or rams you with the car. It's less likely to stop running if you hit someone or several people (in a riot situation) since it's prepared for cross country use and the engine is much more protected.

Fuel containers: Not only jerry cans, but those big metal containers, that hook up like small "u-hauls" ? I'm not sure about their capacity, maybe they can hold one or two barrels of gas. I saw them at construction sites, and they were not that expensive if bought used, before the 2001 crisis. Now, I don't know. Haven't seen them for a while.

A generator: These are imported and very expensive for us. I think that they are now making them here, but I'm not sure about the quality.

A nice TV and DVD player: I know what you are thinking "this guy has gone ... "nuts" " Please, let me explain.

Going out for dinner or to the movies is not only dangerous but also expensive. You WILL find much better use for that money if SHTF.

There are places in Buenos Aires where you can go out for dinner, movies, or theater shows and have a good time, safely. They either have their own security or arrange with the police for added security. These are the kinds of places you are likely to visit if you ever come to Argentina, places where tourists can move around, relatively safe (there are always exceptions, of course). But these places are either for tourists or for the extremely wealthy. I have a good socio-economical level, better than 96% of the population at least, yet I can't afford to spend that amount of money every weekend or even two weekends a month. Going out for a walk is a possibility, and we do go out for a walk every now and then, but let's just say that the view isn't that good, and you can only walk about 6 blocks in the same direction before you get out of the area which is guarded by private security, after that you are on "you are on your own" land. You CAN go for a walk (just like millions that live in Somalia or Afghanistan go for a walk as well) millions of citizens do, but I'd rather not risk it.

Just the day before yesterday, a young woman was waiting at the bus stop in my neighborhood, holding her 6 month old daughter. A cop that was chasing a bad guy opened fire with his High Power, with no regard to bystanders as they always do. The 9mm FMJ (JHP are not allowed for the average police) went right through the baby's buttocks and through the mother. Miraculously, the bullet didn't hit any of the baby's internal organs and the mother also survived after a few days at the hospital. Was that just luck? Maybe, I prefer to think that God does work in mysterious ways.

We have a lot of cases like this, where innocent people get shot by the police, and the stupid "no JHP" rule makes it worse, since 124 gr. FMJ 9mm will penetrate walls, windows, even bad guys and end up injuring or killing innocent people.

So, back to the TV. Good places are too expensive, and just going out for a walk at night with your wife/girlfriend is out of the question. All of a sudden popcorn, pizza and a movie sounds like a good plan.

I'm not saying that you should spend all day in front of the screen like a zombie. Reading is nice, I love reading myself, but once the SHTF, going out with a date at night won't be that easy, nor will it be that cheap. You will end up paying for that added security the shop/bar/theater owner hired, the higher price of gas and food, while a DVD copy can be found everywhere, and costs only a couple of bucks.

After the SHTF there will be a lot of "why don't we watch a movie" nights. Like it or not TV is cheap, safe entertainment. A play station or xbox is also nice to have.

Even if the country collapses, there will always be a guy with a DVD writer making copies. Just something to think about if you like movies.

BOOKS

Oh, almost forgot. If you like reading a lot, buy books now, even if you won't read them for some time. If your economy crashes, paper will become a source of income for many. We have thousands of scavengers collecting cardboard and paper all day long, specially at night when people take out the trash. As a result, books are not cheap, because they have a value of its own in the form of paper.

Also, consider that books are heavy, making transportation expensive and many are printed abroad.

Just as an example: I returned from visiting my parents in Spain with three suitcases. ONE suit case was entirely full of books. Books cost about 80%-200% more than what they cost in USA or Spain.

Guns & ammo: I always liked guns, so I always had weapons. But I didn't have an adequate survival battery. If you don't have a good survival selection of weapons, buy them now, or as soon as your budget allows. Make it one of your priorities, just after food, water and shelter.

There are several posts on the ideal choice of weapons. Get at least a service size pistol and a military semi auto rifle and a 22 handgun/rifle. (try to get both if you can, they are not that expensive).

A bolt rifle (preferably in the same caliber as the semi) a pump 12 ga shotgun and a sub rifle, like a SMG or pistol caliber semi auto carbine (same caliber as pistol) would complete the package.

I forgot to buy a 22 pistol until after 2001, and ended up paying for a Norinco 22 pistol the same price I would have paid for a Ruger pistol before the crisis.

My advice is: See what you use regularly and what you expect to need after TSHTF. Of those goods, see where they are made. If they are made outside your country, they will either increase in price or stop importation entirely after TSHTF.

In my case, one good example (of many, many others) is Gillette disposable blades. They are made in USA, and right now they cost a fortune. But as I said before, check what is being imported.

No point in buying cases of Cubans for trade after TSHTF if you live in Cuba, right?

I wouldn't think of these items as trade goods, but as "gifts" to buy favors, build up relationships with police, government officials, doctors, people you might need favors from.

Stuff, like liquor/wine, a nice pen, perfume, makeup and other "free shop" kind of items can go a long way when you need some strings pulled, or a "friend" within certain circles. And it's not only the item, sweet talking also must be applied.

For example, you need renew your drivers license after the XXXX crisis. The problem is that

the office is low on personal (they had to let go 25% and 50% are on strike) so you'll have to wait 4 months until you get an appointment.

You approach the information desk where you find Betty. Now, Betty hasn't had a date since the age of 10, and she weighs as much as a healthy manatee (though she's not THAT pretty) you kindly ask her to please help you fill the paperwork, and though she's as cold as a Popsicle, you keep calling her by her first name and when you leave she smiles and says good bye.

The next day you drop by and give Betty a Revlon lipstick for "helping" you fill the form, which had difficult questions like "name?" "Age?". It cost you about 4 bucks before the crisis but, since it's made in France, it went up to 20 dollars and then, 2 months ago, they no longer imported it. Revlon saw that they no longer had a market for their 4 Euro lipstick, which now costs Americans 20 dollars and the segment that used to buy it is spending that money in other items like food, so their marketing experts told them that the 4 Euro lipstick is no longer profitable in USA.

Betty used to love that particular lipstick, she thought it made her look like Cindy Crawford (poor Betty) but 20 dollars was more than she could spare in her good looks, and when she finally decided to drop the 40 pounds of M&M's she ate a month in favor for the lipstick, the girl at the drugstore told her that the item is no longer imported into the USA.

Her face lights up when she sees your present, and tells you that you shouldn't have bothered, and she asks how did it go with your license. You tell her that you actually have a problem, it seems that it takes 4 months to renew, and you ask her if, well, maybe she can do something about it... you get the picture.

In other occasions people will let you know that they want a plain and simple "bribe", and there 50 bucks or 100 bucks according to the situation will get the job done. I've used "gifts" (a perfume) to get my passport faster, saved a few months, and I've used bribes every single time the police stopped me for "inspection". I know this does not apply to 1st world countries where most officers are honest self sacrificed people, I mean no insult to the law enforcement community on this forum, but please understand that it does apply to 3rd world countries, and I'm not getting shot by an angry cop over 10 or 20 pesos, let them have their bribe. I tried it once and I will never try it again. A cop stopped me and started BS me. I told him "ok officer, guess you'll have to write me a ticket, I understand". He didn't want to write a ticket, he wanted money and things got ugly. I'm never doing anything that stupid again.

FOOD

A delicate issue. Even though not in the same way, it does affect us all. Keep in mind that if TSHTF, prepared or not, food will always be in your thoughts. If you don't have it you'll do ANYTHING to get it, and if you are prepared you'll worry about being able to get more for the future. Once you see food prices go up between 200% and 300%, or simply see it missing, you'll realize what a valuable commodity food really is.

To those that think that food will never be a problem in USA:

Come visit my country, even though there are desert areas up north, most of the country is fertile "Pampa".

Just after WWII Argentina practically fed Europe. Argentina was known in Europe as "the world's granary". Cattle and wheat was enough to feed our own country and another continent.

So, what happened? Why are there so many that have little or no food and end up eating out of dumpsters?

I mean, the land is still there, isn't it?

Well, the country is the same country that used to be called the "world's granary" but some things changed. Several big, multinational corporations, such as Benetton, bought hundreds of thousands of acres of natural resources. I don't know the exact number, but I do remember that the media started talking about the integrity of the sovereignty of the country being at risk because of these massive purchases of land, so you can imagine how many acres were bought. Mysteriously, the media suddenly dropped the subject.

Another important factor is that now, with our new economy, it's not good business to sell Argentine food to Argentina. Why sell a kg of meat to the local market for 17 pesos when they can now sell it to Spain for 17 Euros when 1 Euro = 3,5 pesos?

All this combined with high unemployment, salaries that are not enough to buy the minimal amount of calories for a typical family, and the high prices resulted in a country that slowly started to suffer hunger.

Again, I can pin point the exact moment when the entire country realized what was happening. After the 2001 crisis things had been bad, but people in Buenos Aires, the capital city and the richest province, didn't realize how bad things actually were in the other provinces.

This was until teachers noted that kids had problems with education. You see, they noticed that they had problems to concentrate, that they fell asleep, and that they found it difficult to resolve mathematical equations.

They later found out that this was due to mal nutrition, kids were not receiving the minimum amount of nutrients for a healthy working body.

The breaking point was when a reporter interviewed a little girl about 8 or 9 years old. The reporter lady asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, the usual kiddy questions.

The girl, crying, said that she didn't want to be anything, that she didn't care.

The lady asked her why was she crying.

She said that she cried because she was hungry, that she had nothing to eat for days, and it was then that I noticed how skinny the little girl actually was.

Seeing children starve is terrible, I guess we all saw those images of the starving kids in Africa. But when you see them speak your same language, with your same accent, in your own country, it hits a nerve.

People talked about it for weeks, and they interviewed pediatricians that confirmed that the number of children dieing because of hunger had increased drastically in the last few months.

So whatever happens, let it be a hurricane, economical collapse, earthquake or meteor hitting earth, food and water always come first.

Ideally you already have a food plan and have a year worth of food in your basement... You don't? Hmm... neither did I when the SHTF and lets just say that I had my manhood up my throat all the time, fearing that supermarkets would definitely close and me and my family would be left without food.

If you don't have your food needs sorted out already, just do what I did, start buying a little extra every time you go to the supermarket. The points you want to look for your storage food are, in order of importance:

- 1) No need of fridge.
- 2) High nutritious value/volume
- 3) Long shelf live, between 1-5 years.
- 4) That they don't need water
- 5) That they don't need cooking

This will usually take you to canned meats, canned tuna, canned vegetables, dried pasta, dehydrated soups, chocolate, milk powder, marmalades, soups, rice and dried beans.

Canned food is excellent when it comes to long shelf life. Most of the time they are already hydrated, so they don't need water, and you can eat them out of the can. Just watch out not to dent the can, if this happens air may get inside and ruin it. If you have a dent or bump in a can, consume it fast. Also remember that once the can is opened, you have to remove the food from the can.

My favorite canned food is tuna. It lasts forever, it's full of proteins, and no matter how often I eat it, it always tastes good. Besides you can combine it with frizzed vegetables or rice.

Canned fruits and vegetables are also good, but they have much less vitamins than the fresh ones, and you loose most of it unless you drink the liquid they come in.

Dried pasta may need a lot of water to cook, but its one of the best ways to store carbs in convenient to use form. Flower or wheat can also be stored in large quantities and are nutritious, but they require more preparation to consume.

We've become quite independent from the fridge, and only use it to keep frozen our fresh pasta (Ñ±oqui) pizza and frizzed vegetables.

We practically freeze everything, because it lasts longer, practically indefinitely, and

because if the lights go out a large mass of frizzed food will last for hours, even a day or two. The more mass of food you have frizzed to longer it will hold.

The survivalist, especially the urban one, should try to rely as little as possible on the fridge. That's why canned food and freeze dried food is your best friend.

Yet, anyone who has been for a while with no fresh fruit knows that after some time the skin starts to suffer. Sores will appear after a while, especially on delicate skin like the lips and mouth. Once you start eating fresh fruits and vegetables again they go away.

This happened to me once, spent to much time without fresh vegetables and my mouth was a mess, full of sores. After a week of eating fresh vegetables regularly the symptoms disappeared. That's why you should try to have some fresh food to supplement you storage food. Not much, just 2 or 3 fruit trees on your garden and a small orchard would be fine. You don't have to feed out of this, you just need a little fresh veggies or fruit every once in a while.

On the news right now while I write this: We had elections last Sunday, we voted senators. It seems that in one of the north provinces people where surrendering their ID documents for bags of groceries, some for water, or for 10 pesos (3 USD) they were later taken to warehouses were they spent the night to ensure that they voted. The next day the candidate's men took them to vote, howled inside cattle trucks, like animals. When they arrived they were given their ID documents back with the number of list they had to vote. Thugs guide them and ensure they vote who they want.

HEALTH & FITNESS

Visit you doctor NOW. Get yourself fixed. Visit the dentist and make sure your mouth is in perfect conditions. Nothing is worse than having toothache and no one available to take care of it. Remember that doctors may not be as available as they are now, in the future.

For example I got eye surgery to take care of my sight problem. Now I see perfectly without glasses.

The advantage of laser eye surgery isn't limited to not needing glasses. (which can brake and would be nearly impossible to replace after TSHTF)

Even people react to you in a different way. Humans are after all instinctive animals.

Bad guys will look at you as a weaker person if you wear glasses. Maybe they don't know that at a conscious level, maybe they do, but they do react differently.

This is not me imagining stuff, it's the way things are. Old people and women are specially vulnerable. After old people and women and children, come small framed people, the smaller you are, the weaker you look, the more likely you are to be chosen as a victim by a bad guy. It sounds, cruel, and it sure is, but that's the way it works.

A young man with a well formed body, broad shoulders, muscled arms and a "don't f*** with me" face, is less likely to be a victims of small time thieves. If a professional group choses you as a target that's a completely different story, of course.

Talk to your doctor a lot. Just like "The little Prince", never stop yourself from asking a question. Adopt that as a general philosophy and you'll end up learning a little about everything. Mechanics, doctors, policemen, you can always learn something new from people with skills.

As a survivalist, and as a smart person, you should try to know a little about everything, Always be curious.

That's how I learned that I had to diversify my stock of antibiotics. A doctor told me, that the body will adapt if you always use the same, making that particular antibiotic not that effective, specially in small children, so now I keep two different kinds of antibiotics.

Working out 3 times a week, for a couple of hours will keep you in shape. I work out at home, I have a bench and some weights. Try to compliment some aerobics and weight lifting.

Working the boxing bag is good exercise, works most muscles if done right, and you'll have a much more powerful punch. Keep in mind that a bag is no replacement for a sparring partner and that the bag does not faint nor does it punch back. Still, it good exercise and your punch will be more powerful if you connect.

Running belts and bicycles are also good.

Research on the subject and make your own routine, join a gym and talk to a professional if possible.

Whatever you do, the idea is to have a fit, healthy body. No use in shooting $\hat{A} \frac{1}{2}$ MOA at 100 yards if you have a gut that hangs half way to the floor and you cant run that same distance without needing an oxygen mask.

I know, shooting is fun, and working out isn't. At least for most, but after some time you'll start to enjoy it, your stamina and morale will definitely increase, and you'll start looking forward to working out.

The survivalist that spends 3 hours a week on his gun skills and no time at all on his own body is not doing things right.

Imagine if you have to run away from a riot/gunfight/attack while carrying your BOB, or fighting bare handed against someone that got you by surprise. This applies for life in general , before or after TSHTF a man has to now how to fight bare handed. You don't have to be Bruce Lee or Mike Tyson, just know how to through a decent punch, cover your face, or some kind of martial art classes.

I once had a fight that got a little ugly. It happened in my mother in law's house, which proves that thing can go bad everywhere at any time. A guy my wife's sister was dating argued with me and things got physical. He had problems with the police for beating up an ex girlfriend (which he was proud of, go figure) and had spend 2 years in jail for stealing cars. My wife's sister was showing up with mysterious bruises on her body, from "falling while working out". So you could say this guy wasn't my favorite person. Anyway, he grabbed my neck by surprise, I grabbed his arm with both hands, one in his hand and the other in his elbow, and twisted it around. The leverage made him let go of my neck and a

kept on twisting it forcing him around. He punched me with his other hand but the positing wasn't on his favor so it was just a glancing blow. He pushed with his back against me, so I placed my left arm around hid neck, my elbow flexed over his Adam's apple. The guy went berserk so I decided that I had to hold on until he passed out, or I would get seriously hurt. I had practiced this choking move with my friend, the one that has the farm I talked about before. He told me that after 30 seconds of choking the person passes out, and after 60 seconds, if you keep choking him, he dies.

So I placed my left arm firmly around his neck while holding my left hand firmly with my right arm, pressing as hard as I could.

The guy went nuts. He slammed me against the walls, trying to get me away from his back.

He started clawing with his fingers on my biceps, desperate. Me? I just hold my lock around his neck, mentally counting. As if by magic, after 20-25 seconds. He lost all strength and fell to his knees like a rag doll, and I let him go.

Meanwhile my wife, her sister and my mother in law were all screaming at me to stop.

Once he caught his breath he said that I was psycho, and that he was just fooling around. Not believing a word he said, I said I was sorry and we both got into the elevator, since we were leaving.

As soon as I close the elevator door, the s*** bag attacks me again. I guess he felt humiliated in front of the woman he beat up. He tried to grab me the same way I did. I knew that this was getting out of hand and I completely lost patience with this clown.

I brought my serrated Cold Steel EI hombre from my pocket and placed the dull side against his arm. He got the message instantly a let go of me. Once he did this I shoved him against the elevator, my forearm pressing against his neck and the knife under the neck as well. He calmed down instantly, saying he was sorry, bla ,bla, bla.

When we got out of the elevator I told him that if he ever got close to me or my family again I would put a bullet in his head.

I never saw him again.

This guy was a thief and women beater and I had no use him. Besides these are the kind of rats that would brake into your house when you leave, or worse.

I'm ranting all over the place again. What I mean is that practicing defensive moves is useful, specially if you spar with someone that knows his thing. My friend practices Judo. He won the state championship and was left in 3rd place in the nationals final.

Practice as you would fight in real life. Getting chocked isn't nice, but you get to know what you are working with and know how effective it actually is.

Being in shape will also make you less prone to diseases, such as high pressure, heart problems, and will boost your immune system in general.

Knowing first aid procedures is always helpful. I'll take the red cross course this summer. Keep a first aid kit and any other special medicine you may need. If you take drugs regularly try to have at least a year's worth of the stuff.

Medicines are hard to get and expensive, many are made in other countries and if SHTF they might not be available. My father in law has Parkinson and needs a special medicine that is no longer imported. He asks friends that travel to get it for him.

I stock pile as much medicines as I can. Apart from the regular 1st aid kit stuff you usually have at home, I concentrate on Ibuprofen and antibiotics, both for children and adults.

Antibiotics are precious here, with all the viruses that are floating around. Lung infections are particularly dangerous.

Also remember that keeping a clean, ventilated house goes a long way when it comes to preventing diseases. This is hard when the city is full of filth and there are cockroaches and rats everywhere but it can be done.

My neighborhood isn't that bad, there are places that are much, much worse, where people literally sleep and eat with rats. Cockroaches are a problem, but I keep them somewhat controlled with that poison that comes in syringes and you place around the house.

That reminds me, stock up on rat and cockroach poison. Services are bad in general, and the garbage collectors are no exception.

Once, they went on strike for about a week (though there are worst places where they go months without collecting) and you could see rats running around eh piles of garbage that people threw on the street's boulevard.

This is not healthy, of course. And helps spread diseases all over the city, so keep that in mind as well.