

Lessons from Argentina's economic collapse

ferfal

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 (Ã±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 your 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 where 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 $\hat{A}1\frac{1}{2}$ 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 or 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 El 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.