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Which Way for Today's Mass Radicalization? Capitalism's Impending Catastrophe...or a Socialist Future

Predatory capitalism is facing its greatest crises ever. The gap between the exploiting few, who rule by guile and deceit – and brute force when necessary – and the vast majority, who are compelled to sell their labor to survive, has never been greater. A stunning half of the working-age population stand unemployed or subjected to a low-wage, part-time, gig economy wherein unprecedented numbers live paycheck to paycheck in fear of eviction or foreclosure. One in five families are unable to provide food for their children. 27 million Americans and their family members have lost health insurance coverage during the pandemic.

That systemic racism permeates every institution of U.S. society is only denied by an ever-declining tiny minority, cheered on by racist hatemongering Donald Trump, who persists in increasingly irrational rants and threats of violence despite the counsel of his frequently-fired sycophant advisors and the top leadership of the Republican Party. Even the worst of them fear going down with Trump's sinking ship. CNN reports that 84 percent of Americans support the anti-racist demonstrations that have mobilized an estimated 15-26 million in over 2000 cities and towns. The times are a-changing indeed.

Daily COVID-19 infection rates soar

A month ago, when the rate of new daily COVID-19 infections “plateaued” for a week or so at 22,000, all 50 state governors, Democrats and Republicans alike, devised plans for a return to work. Ignoring the generalized opposition of the scientific community, the

ruling class as a whole calculated that “the economy,” that is, the trillions of dollars in profits extracted from their workers, trumped any concerns about the predicted massive loss of human lives.

The phased re-openings brought on disaster. Insanity prevailed. One month in, by July 27, close to 70,000 new infections were registered daily for a total now exceeding 4.5 million, with epidemiologists estimating that perhaps ten times this number have been infected, with most infections going undetected. The number of daily deaths has risen to over 1,000. To date, 154,000 are dead.

Yet astonishingly, several of the nation’s top research groups, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), now advocate reopening public schools. Their previously released stringent guidelines to do so, they now insist, are “suggestions” only. They pretend ignorance of the hundreds of billions needed to implement them – an amount that is absent from the new round of hoped-for bi-partisan bailout proposals, which largely focus on giving money to corporations. The CDC’s sudden concern over the “psychological damage” to students deprived of in-person education barely masks the underlying pressure exerted by the corporate elite to ignore the science in order to free up parents from childcare responsibilities and thus enable workers to return to capitalism’s factories and myriad workplaces.

The CDC’s assertion that students are less vulnerable to COVID-19 is increasingly contradicted by evidence of the likelihood that students will return home each day to infect their more vulnerable parents and grandparents, not to mention their teachers and other school workers. A recent study found that children are very effective carriers of the disease, with infected young children having 5 to 100 times more virus material in their upper respiratory tract than adults.

On July 31, the CDC reported that 260 children and staff became infected with the virus at a Georgia overnight camp after less than a week. Of those tested, 76% were infected. The camp had required “all trainees, staff members, and campers to provide documentation of a negative viral SARS-CoV-2 test less than 12 days before arriving,” according to the report. Three days after campers arrived on June 21, “officials began sending campers home on June 24 and closed the camp on June 27,” the CDC reports.

The fact that even backyard gatherings of family and friends are now discouraged nationwide flies in the face of the notion that millions of students can safely interact with their teachers, other students and their families without deadly consequences.

Capitalism and the search for a vaccine

The notion is absurd in the extreme that the search for a vaccine can most effectively take place in the framework of the largely secret research facilities of monopolized pharmaceutical corporations, where profits are first and foremost, as opposed to the nationally and internationally organized and coordinated efforts of scientists everywhere. The former is the logic of today's debates over the sanctity of "intellectual property rights" and cyberwar secret surveillance and espionage; the latter is the logic of the socialist future, where the knowledge of one becomes the collective property of all. Imagine a scientist or hacker stealing the data on an effective vaccine or cure, making it freely available to all humanity, and being jailed for it!

These "intellectual property" laws create opportunities for enormous profits for the drug companies, as their stock prices shoot upwards with any positive announcement that carries with it the promise of megaprofits from being among the first companies to produce a COVID-19 vaccine. In the last few months, executives of these drug companies – many of which have never successfully produced a vaccine – have made over \$1 billion by selling stocks that skyrocketed after companies made announcements about their work on a vaccine or received some of Trump's Operation Warp Speed vaccine funding, according to a July 25 New York Times article, titled "Corporate Insiders Pocket \$1 Billion in Rush for Coronavirus Vaccine."

One example is the hedge fund-owned drug company Vaxart, which the article notes "has never brought a vaccine to market." Vaxart's stock price increased tenfold from January to April after it announced it was working on coronavirus vaccine. Its stock then quadrupled over the course of two days in June, after Vaxart first announced that it had "signed a letter of intent with another company" for possible future mass-production of a coronavirus vaccine, and the next day announced that it had been selected for a preliminary study around

Such companies often promote their drugs with a unique gimmick to make it an attractive prospect for investors and government funding. Another company, Novavax, promotes theirs as using an "innovative" technology that would make the vaccine easier to mass-

produce – except that neither Novavax nor its “innovative technology” have ever succeeded in producing a working vaccine of any kind. Vaxart’s strategy for eye-catching is that its vaccine, unusually, would be taken as a pill.

Immediately following these announcements and the immense stock rises they engendered, the hedge fund owner of Vaxart sold 21 million shares of the company, worth more than \$197 million. Novavax got \$1.6 billion from the Trump administration’s program, and its stock – soon after its executives awarded themselves nearly 1 million shares – has gone from \$24 a share in April to \$143 today.

For capitalists, whether or not their companies ever actually produce a working vaccine is beside the point. The pandemic has created extraordinary opportunities to take advantage of speculation in the drug market – which they intend to do at the highest price possible!

It is in this context that a great debate is emerging in both ruling class circles and within the broad array of social justice organizations as to how the abovementioned great crises can or will be resolved.

The ruling class perspective on how to resolve these crises

Following Trump’s 2016 election and again in the run-up to the 2018 mid-term elections, the Democrats offered a single solution: Vote Democrat! Win majorities in both houses of congress! And Dump Trump! To this end they meticulously organized and tightly controlled massive demonstrations across the country. Make no mistake, the Democrats learned their lessons when they abstained from and actively opposed the massive mobilizations against the U.S. genocidal war in Vietnam that slaughtered four million people, largely civilians. The independently organized mobilizations of the 1960s and 1970s gave impetus to the important civil rights and antiwar movements, while also contributing to the demise of the repressive bipartisan-enforced McCarthy-era witch hunting.

Today, the Democrats are no longer abstentionist. They and their corporate supporters and foundations influence and fund a vast array of liberal-minded reform organizations, NGOs and faith-based groups that collectively, for example, initiated, promoted and financed the 2016 Women’s March anti-Trump protests, drawing an estimated five million protesters across the country. Literally every speaker in every city was either an elected Democrat or directly associated with one or more of the vast array of Democratic Party-supporting mainstream liberal organizations.

Democrats: graveyard of social movements

In these actions, and with regard to nearly all those that followed in the three years thereafter, the Democrats, the notorious “graveyard of social movements,” and their kept allies effectively turned society’s growing outrage at the bi-partisan attacks on working people to the electoral arena. Obama’s mass deportations, his seven simultaneous imperialist wars of conquest, his massive natural gas fracking operations, and his continuity with the Clinton-era’s bloating expenditures to the racist prison-industrial complex, were disappeared from the scene virtually overnight.

In Obama’s last atrocity of his first term, he signed the National Defense Authorization Act that allowed the military to indefinitely detain without charges terrorist suspects, including American citizens arrested in the United States. At that time, two retired four-star Marine generals had called on the president to veto the bill. In a December 2011 New York Times op-ed piece, they deemed it “misguided and unnecessary.” Generals Charles C. Krulak and Joseph P. Hoar stated, “Current law empowers the military to detain people caught on the battlefield, but this provision would expand the battlefield to include the United States.... Due process would be a thing of the past.” Today, Trump’s overt but not too dissimilar racism, sexism, warmongering, climate crisis denial and legislation abandoning fundamental civil liberties have become the corporate media’s prime focus. Yet Trump could be said to have used Obama’s legislation to send federal forces to U.S. cities.

Today’s “Dump Trump! Vote Democrat or fascism is coming!” bombast

In the run-up to the 2018 midterm elections, the Democrats shepherded militant teachers, who had successfully struck statewide in several red states, into the electoral arena with their pledge to run 300 AFT and NEA union members or their supporters as candidates – all pledged to the Democrats. The promising and unprecedented teachers’ uprising was abruptly cut short and funneled into the dead-end electoral arena. Today’s Women’s March 2020 website, in addition to a broad range of just demands for women’s rights, includes, and is essentially defined by, the “Dump Trump” admonition. The same with the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) organization that emerged following a series of police murders of unarmed Blacks. M4BL today states on its website, “BLM’s #WhatMatters2020 is a campaign aimed to maximize the impact of the BLM movement by galvanizing BLM supporters and allies to the polls in the 2020 U.S Presidential Election to build collective power and ensure candidates are held accountable for the

issues that systematically and disproportionately impact Black and under-served communities across the nation.” M4BL is a non-profit funded in part by Ford Foundation grants.

Federal troops in Portland

Portland Democratic Party mayor Ted Wheeler’s recent publicity stunt in rushing to the front lines of a demonstration to denounce the tear gas-launching federal forces from ICE and Homeland Security sent by Trump to protect a federal building was not much appreciated by local activists. Williams was taunted by demonstrators as he left the protest with repeated chants of “Tear Gas Teddy,” stemming from the mayor’s own city police previously launching the same tear gas canisters against Portland’s anti-racist protesters. Though Trump threatens to send federal forces to Portland and other cities with Democratic Party mayors – as if the Democrats have insufficient repressive forces of their own – no one doubts that when spirited anti-racist protests have exploded in cities and towns, violent police repression has been the rule, regardless of which party holds office. Trump himself ordered the withdrawal of his federal goons from Portland, with his underlings essentially revealing that there were never more than a dozen involved in the first place. Trump’s bluff and bluster were once again revealed as rhetorical bullshit.

Electoral advantage in mind, the same mayors who decry Trump’s threats of violence – and its manifestation in Washington, D.C., when the posturing buffoon ordered peaceful demonstrators disbursed with clubs and noxious gases from Lafayette Square in scenes broadcast nationwide – employ the same brutal violence in good measure and without reservation. The generals who denounced Obama’s 2011 signing on to the use of federal troops to quell protestors in the U.S. have their counterparts in today’s military establishment. As before, they are firmly against it – “at this time,” they always add.

Is the fascist threat posed today?

Aside from the moron Trump and a handful of his subordinates, all in step with an associated rightwing band of racist media personalities, no serious forces today dare to pose the fascist threat. Indeed, Trump’s camp is being increasingly deserted by his own party tops, as his recent poll numbers indicate that his re-election prospects are dim. When he recently tweeted out the suggestion that the November election may need to be “delayed,” Republican leaders Senator Mitch McConnell and Representative Kevin McCarthy immediately responded in unison that “Never in the history of the country...have we ever not had a federally scheduled election on time,” and that there

would be no delay of the upcoming election, regardless of anything Trump says. That Trump would impose martial law or challenge the results of his increasingly probable election defeat is far less a concern of any serious ruling class think tankers or experienced politician than is the present broad-ranging radicalization in progress among unprecedented working class layers.

Turning this radicalization into the safe channels of the Democratic Party and thwarting its coalescing into new and independent mass working class formations are the central and primary concern of today's capitalist elite. They fully understand that the present radicalization has been sparked by unprecedented solidarity with the most oppressed sectors of U.S. society, and that its roots also lie in the generalized and increasing impoverishment of the vast majority. Capitalism's multiple failures in dealing with any of the present existential crises – from the COVID-19 horror to the impending global warming climate catastrophe and endless wars of mass murder and conquest – are also no longer easily swept aside with the electoral wink of a Bernie Sanders, not to mention Joseph Biden. Yet, those who are adept at social control overwhelmingly continue to place their bets on maintaining the facade of democracy and the myth that the Democrats have serious answers to the converging crises that plague working class America. They fear that any resort to playing the fascist card of mass repression, at least at this time, might well bring on a response that threatens capitalist rule itself.

The question of leadership

Today's massive and unprecedented protests remain largely leaderless. The inspiring chants of the Black Lives Matter movement and its ubiquitous images have almost zero organizational expression, except for the largely online presence of the Democratic Party election-oriented reformist leadership of M4BL and similar groups. Tragically, no fighting component exists in today's terribly bureaucratized, class-collaborationist – if not corrupt – trade union movement. The July 20 SEIU and Teamster-called Strike for Black Lives actions were at best symbolic. With regard to the Teamsters, their misleaders failed to even publish notices of planned "strikes," if there were any at all. SEIU made a better show, listing "strike" actions across the country that were most often symbolic eight minutes and forty-six seconds silent observances of George Floyd's police execution. There is thus a giant gap between the generalized and nationally supported outage in the streets and any organizational form aimed at challenging capitalist power in the electoral arena and at capitalism's critical points of production. Unless and until that

gap is bridged, the present mass protests will remain sorely lacking in strategic orientation.

Capitalism's foundation in slavery and exploitation

At a time when the “founding fathers” capitalist state – brought into being by the mass murder and super-exploitation of slave labor along with the genocide of native peoples – stands exposed as never before, the movement to end this capitalist horror in its present manifestations stands before us, closer than ever, crying out for an independent leadership. Capitalism's monstrous founding legacies, cleanly erased from the history books and from the general discourse for centuries, has today emerged full-throated – from George Washington's slaves and his dentures made from their pulled teeth, to Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger's racist advocacy of selective breeding to “improve” the human race, to the Sierra Club's founding father John Muir, who similarly advocated racist eugenics along with driving indigenous people off their lands. None of the above, and a million other atrocities of the distant past and today's present, were mere accidents of history. They were the inherent economic, political and ideological expressions of capitalist imperatives, just as the exploitation of today's wage slaves is and will be tomorrow, until the system itself is abolished. That time is nearer than ever.

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