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Capitalism is Smartphones and Eugenics



Image by Nick Fancher.

We've entered the era of smartphones and eugenics. "They're eating cats, they're eating dogs," Trump had exclaimed frantically, echoing words that could've been uttered by a Klansman in the early 1920s, but now that very same level of toxicity having been beamed into households all across the world for whoever has the stomach to bear it.^[1] So many now have access to learning about events on the ground from almost anywhere, where we can communicate, send money to, and spread the word of various political events due to the devices in peoples' pockets, and yet, none of that alters the fact that entire family trees have been erased in places like Palestine. No amount of streaming with emojis can negate the brutality of Israel's siege, a high-tech form of genocidal intent and killing, with drones swarming the skies, but a genocide nonetheless.^[2]

R. Palme Dutt, a Marxist theoretician of the interwar period in Europe, noted similar dynamics in his own era, the clashing of so-called technological progress with civilizational decay and impending horror. At the time, the productive capacities of Europe had expanded tremendously in a rather short period of time. Major manufacturing and industrialization had finally led to a capacity across most Western societies, including the U.S., to resolve issues of hunger and starvation. However, countries chose to get rid of their “surplus” food, burning it, dumping some of it into the nearest ocean.

“The burning of millions of bags of coffee or tons of grain, in the midst of mass starvation and poverty, have horrified the world,” he stated at the time, while the global economy had still been reeling from years of a financial reckoning.^[3] In parts of the colonized world, European policymakers would intentionally funnel basic food commodities, like rice and grain, to maintain high levels of prices for such products, in the process leading to mass starvation in places like Bengal. Prior to European colonization, famines were a rare phenomenon. Even in feudal times, local authorities, however authoritarian and demeaning, had kept aside piles of grain to satiate the masses in times of hardship, to avoid unrest. But that had all changed the moment the British ships arrived, followed by the French and the Americans, all of whom were dedicated to squeezing profit out of every inch of land and person, from the trader to the peasant.^[4]

Treating food as a commodity rather than meeting human needs remains a routine feature of our global system. It was only a month or so into the pandemic when farmers across the U.S. were compelled to destroy acres of “excess” food. “In scenes reminiscent of the Great Depression, dairy farmers dumped lakes of fresh cow’s milk (3.7m gallons a day in early April, now about 1.5 million per day), hog and chicken farmers aborted piglets and ethanized hens by the thousands, and crop growers plowed acres of vegetables into the ground as the nation’s brittle and anarchic food supply chain began to snap and crumble.”^[5]

In 2008, Japan, one of America’s closest allies, had plans to “dump” excess rice in parts of Asia to alleviate food insecurity. The U.S. was against this, the number one reason being that it could decrease the demand for rice in consumer markets, allowing the price of rice to “dampen.” A *New York Times* report, the prestigious rag for the “concerned” elite, had stated at the time: “The effect would be more pronounced if Japan followed it with further sales or donations from the 1.7 million tons of imported rice now sitting in Japanese warehouses. Roughly 30 million tons of rice are traded globally each year.”^[6] As Dutt understood it generations ago, the mishmash of progress, as in the productive capacity to create a far richer

world than it's ever been imagined, coupled with what he described as "decay", was not a problem of humanity losing its soul in the modern age. It wasn't a problem of technological advancement rotting our level of empathy with one another, or something philosophical of that nature. Rather, it's a direct product of the disorder and irrationalism capitalism forces the vast majority of humanity to endure. "Today they are burning wheat and grain, the means of human life. To-morrow they will be burning living human bodies", Dutt stated as early as 1934, predicting the death spiral modern capitalism would allow to fester, leading to the next great war that would end up killing millions of people due to inter-imperialist rivalry desperate for new markets to conquer.^[7] Much of the world had been carved up and seized by the British empire, the French, and the U.S., with newly industrialized nations such as Italy and Germany frustrated at their own limited right as Europeans to dominate and control parts of Africa and Asia. This was one of the main reasons precipitating the war, with fascism as a product of this rising anger over the denial of the German peoples and the Italian peoples, and the Japanese, access to more colonies and overseas territories they could also brutally exploit for extreme profit and gain.^[8]

Through capitalism, such things as economic growth, competition, and the drive for more are prioritized against what humanity truly requires for its existence, from peace and security to universal access to healthy food, housing and entertainment. This rotting dynamic has been the most pronounced in the U.S., and countries it chooses to ally with, like South Korea, where at the most molecular level, our daily lives become a constant web of stress and rolling chaos. How else to describe being surrounded by so much alleged abundance, and yet, not having consistent access to it based on how much you make, being denied that access in critical moments even, like when severely ill. Sharon Zhang at *Truthout* wrote merely a few years ago, "A new report done by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has found that drug prices in the U.S. on average are about two to four times higher than they are in Australia, Canada and France."^[9] Some of this has changed, but only for certain medicines, like insulin, but even then, Americans have died due to this inane system whereby you either have the money to give to these private entities that hoard these essential resources and services, or you are compelled to plead for donations to help pay for life-saving medications instead.^[10] How is this sanity, let alone moral?

Most of us navigate our lives with this level of pressure mounting. Either we have limited access to the most fundamental things we need, as employees, as consumers who can sustain some level of income cobbled together in a mesh of part-time and full-time work, or we lose it all in a matter of weeks, months maybe, if we're so fortunate. One moment you can be at

your computer, or at the cash register, filing reports, running items through barcode scanners mindlessly, and in another, you're hiding in your bedroom as a voice bellows at you from behind your apartment door, right before another eviction notice has been slipped underneath your door.

It is in the "rational" interest to cause this level of mayhem and pain, and panic in our lives by businesses that are allowed to dominate and control how much we work, how much we own, how much time we have to be ourselves. Unemployment is a necessary condition for capitalism to thrive. For private employers to retain an increasing level of profit, they must euphemistically "let people go", cut them off. There can never be full employment either since capitalists need and desire some level of people without jobs so they can always replace their existing employees if unrest starts to brew, and to drive down wages with this threat in place. Economist Richard Wolff states, "Capitalism makes employment depend chiefly on capitalists' decisions to undertake production, and those decisions depend on profits. If capitalists expect profits high enough to satisfy them, they hire. If capitalists don't, we get unemployment. Capitalism requires the unemployed, their families and their communities to live with firing decisions made by capitalists even though they are excluded from participating in those decisions."^[11] Such decisions sow chaos at the personal level for so many, and even social problems that communities must endure (like crime), and yet, these considerations are barely considered since the main guiding light is how heavy a man's wallet can get.

Dutt too spoke of how major capitalists, just as the global capitalist economy was steadying itself through some measure of increased social democracy, decided to unload workers they felt they didn't need, once more sowing disorder and political turmoil. "Increasing millions are thrown aside as 'superfluous'", he stated.^[12]

However, none of this can compare to the most chaotic and disorderly result of all: climate change. Quite literally, the right for mainly Western companies and nations to accrue wealth has been the reason why the waters are rising across the globe, why so much land has become more challenging to grow food on, why the temperatures are rising to dangerously high levels, threatening the majority of the world's population.^[13] The need to see red arrows ticking upward on graphs unveiled at executive boardrooms across Europe and the U.S. has been the reason why humanity is on the brink of extinction.

LORDS OF CHAOS

Only in capitalist societies can thugs like Trump, and Bolsonaro find space to not merely fester, but thrive, and maneuver into major seats of power. At the time of Dutt's major

work, *Fascism and Social Revolution*, published prior to the horrors of WWII, fascism itself had already become a worldwide phenomenon, having conquered state power in Italy, Germany, Japan, and threatening to do so in the U.S. among other places. Of course, the U.S. itself, although not explicitly run by a fascist party, remained in the throes of white supremacy and colonialist interests. It was the same within the British Isles too, with figures like Winston Churchill already professing his hatred of black and brown peoples, eager for the British government to pour money and technological support behind every hard-right nationalist movement imaginable to squelch the rising tide of “Bolshevism” across parts of Eastern Europe.

The rise of fascism and other forms of extreme forms of racialized terror (i.e. Jim and Jane Crow) had everything to do with capitalism and how it breeds elements of social dysfunction, intentionally or not. At one level, due the chaos that capitalism itself creates and the various classes affected by such chaos, people themselves can be driven, out of lost privilege in many instances, toward extreme right political movements. As Dutt explains, during times of economic crises, no one was immune. Even those who have been raised to believe they are “middle class”, a meaningless vacuous concept designed to obscure one’s true class position (you can earn six figures and still be an employee reliant on your job), can start to feel the ground underneath them shake. However, because such elements of society have been developed intellectually to think they’re entitled to more, and are better than others, in many examples, such groups lash out at those below or around them instead of seeking solidarity against said system of exploitation and unjust results. This is more of an issue, Dutt explains, when societies lack a robust labor movement that’s radical and internationalist, able to funnel the rage of the white-collar workers and occasionally, even small business owners, into something far more productive for themselves and others. In the American context, the rise of overt white supremacy was eventually welcomed by various capitalists because this meant a force that could stamp down on socialist, or more liberatory movements that sought to free the black masses and other nonwhite groups from their position as being heavily exploitable and captured as a consumer base for separate, oftentimes subpar, services and goods.^[14]

But even this last point has everything to do with the broader economic system. In the U.S., political power and speech is fundamentally linked with money and wealth. Although on technical terms all civic and various interest groups can participate in lobbying government institutions, for the most part, those who have the most money can effectively shape policy at a greater pace, able to unleash their army of lawyers into every conceivable issue-based policy discussion at Capitol Hill.

Political scientist, Lee Drutman, in one of the rare well-written *Atlantic* pieces, writes, “Corporations now spend about \$2.6 billion a year on reported lobbying expenditures—more than the \$2 billion we spend to fund the House (\$1.18 billion) and Senate (\$860 million). It’s a gap that has been widening since corporate lobbying began to regularly exceed the combined House-Senate budget in the early 2000s. Today, the biggest companies have upwards of 100 lobbyists representing them, allowing them to be everywhere, all the time. For every dollar spent on lobbying by labor unions and public-interest groups together, large corporations and their associations now spend \$34. Of the 100 organizations that spend the most on lobbying, 95 consistently represent business.”^[15]

But beyond the explicit political channels available to people, allegedly, capitalism privileges the worst elements of people to attain power and control. If it is a meritocracy, it is a meritocracy for the craven and cunning, the sociopathic and disjointed. In American life, the distribution of land to white “settlers”, for the purposes of extending capitalist hegemony across the North American continent, empowered the worst to exact revenge and bloodlust against various groups of native and indigenous peoples. The Northern obsession over sustaining high levels of private manufacturing was intrinsically tied to the resources plucked and grown by enslaved Africans.^[16]

In the modern era, starting in Dutt’s time, capitalists not only created the conditions for the indirect creation of swamp things and horrid extensions of themselves into the rest of civil society, they actively supported rightwing formations, from the right-wing of the social democrats who promised some measure of stability without “Bolshevism”, to finally, fascist groups and various rightwing nationalists, all of whom dedicated to smashing communist and socialist workers organizations across Europe. In the U.S., the growth of the Klan was supported by business owners, national and regional, as a means of instilling terror and “discipline” against the domestic “horde” of black and nonwhite peoples seeking self-determination, and labor groups vying for dignity and some measure of control over their own lives.^[17]

In Italy, Dutt writes, the army itself trained Mussolini’s forces and stepped aside as those same forces rampaged through socialist party labor halls and community centers. As communists threatened to bring democracy to Germany, the German capitalists and their allies abroad eagerly feted and funded what was the Nazi party. “Unlimited funds, not only from German bourgeois, but also from foreign bourgeois sources, were poured into the National Socialist coffers,” he explained.^[18]

One of the leading backers of Trump is Elon Musk, a billionaire able to accrue wealth and power during “normal” times under capitalism.^[19] Now, he uses that same wealth and influence to spread disinformation and hate speech, reminiscent of the 1920s, through social media, as well as throwing his support behind someone as odious and confusing as Trump, a billionaire himself, having done the brave thing of not paying workers, and inheriting his father’s money.^[20]

But before Trump became the increasingly spiteful figure he is, uncomfortably alongside Musk, the political class, both Democrat and “moderate” Republican, supported him, and allowed for him to grow his wealth and control.^[21] While working class black and brown families were torn apart in the ‘90s, Trump was applauded for his branding schemes.^[22] Just as others were being hit by drones, Trump, even though he was humiliated, was invited to luncheons and major public events, despite his track record of being a notorious scumbag.^[23]

Beyond Trump or Trumpism itself, the various scurrilous ideas that consist of his platform, like his intense hatred of immigrants from Latin America, China, and parts of Africa (essentially, the entirety of the nonwhite world), have been pet projects among billionaires for decades.^[24] John Tanton, one of the leading “advocates” against immigration from the so-called Third World, soaked in his fear of “demographic” changes to the U.S., succeeded in spreading his poisonous gospel with the aid of benefactors such as Cordelia Scaife May, part of the wealthy Mellon of Carnegie Mellon fame.^[25] “With May’s support, Tanton established a small network of think tanks and nonprofits that would, in the decades ahead, grow to become the most powerful mainstream advocates of immigration restriction since the early nineteenth century—a key component in the ruling class’s ideological machinery of exploitation and oppression,” writes Brendan O’Connor in his study of the rise of the modern far right in *Blood Red Lines: How Nativism Fuels the Right*.^[26] As much as companies have branded themselves as empathetic or somewhat oriented to aspects of social justice (at least in some scraps of rhetoric), they easily align with the existing security state as it serves to harass, intimidate and sow mass panic and fear among black and brown working class and poor migrants. “In fact, brands and private industry had pride of place at the Border Security Expo,” O’Connor details, “Corporate sponsors included familiar names like Verizon and Motorola, and other less well-known ones, such as Elbit Systems of America, a subsidiary of Israel’s largest private defense contractor, as well as a handful of IT firms with aggressive slogans like ‘Ever Vigilant’ (CACI), ‘Securing the Future’ (ManTech, and ‘Securing Your Tomorrow’ (Unisys).”^[27]

Coalitional corporate entities, like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which includes companies like Amazon and Johnson & Johnson among other heavyweights, exists solely to influence politicians, to develop networks of think tanks, and to pour money into astroturf on-the-ground groups to do everything possible to stall any form of progressive legislation that would improve the lives of working people, and various marginalized groups.^[28] Such organizations end up diminishing the natural antibodies of a healthy political system, of radicalized labor and the left, that could serve as a bulwark against impeding fascism. “Despite its generally low profile, ALEC has drawn scrutiny recently for promoting gun rights policies like the Stand Your Ground law at the center of the Trayvon Martin shooting case in Florida, as well as bills to weaken labor unions and tighten voter identification rules.”^[29]

What benefits the public interest, including a safe and healthy political system, is far from the minds of most corporations and those who run them, no matter how well spoken and articulate they may be in front of the cameras. A Trump, a Musk, a Sheldon Adelson, a Bill Gates, a Jeff Bezos, Steve Bannon will routinely slither into the moonlight so long as there exists the swamp, a bubbling sweltering pile of business “rationale” and anti-egalitarian anti-human debris, lurking and seeking an opportunity to smash and dominate.

And when the contradictions of life under capitalist hegemony expands, such forces will continue to unify against any form of legitimate and effective labor and justice-oriented agitation. They’d rather watch the world burn than allow for anyone to be able to control their own waking lives.

COMMUNISM IS ORDER & PEACE

Communism has stood in stark contrast to the chaos and lack of control that most people endure while surviving the vicious cycle of booms and busts in a capitalist system. Under capitalism, social dysfunction and disorder are the norm, increasingly so. This is not to suggest that somehow all social issues or at all times, social order, will be present in a socialist world. There will still be tensions between people, conflicting issues too. But what is so different about a socialist world compared to a capitalist one that we have currently, a product of U.S. imperial rule, is that such disorder and dysfunction are severely limited, and can be better resolved since the prime objective of a socialist society internationally is one that privileges and incentivizes the public welfare over private selfish desires, especially any that’s been attached to the profit-motive that’s led us down this abyss that we’re currently experiencing.

“The workers’ dictatorship is the *only* alternative to the capitalist dictatorship, which at present is increasingly passing from the older ‘democratic’ to Fascist forms,” Dutt stated.^[30]

Peace and security, social order and justice can only be achieved once there is a system in place that doesn’t allow for wealth to equate with political power and rampant influence. Order and peace is unleashed, allowed to thrive, when goods and services are managed, not for private gain, but rather for the public welfare. In a socialist society, people would still need to labor, but when they do, it’ll not be for any private employer. Instead, it would be done to help provide what the general public needs and wants. Housing, healthcare, education, entertainment, and food, among other fundamental things that make life worth living will be managed and distributed by government institutions, institutions that are transparent and have a higher level of input from workers, and communities that have historically been displaced and disenfranchised.

Essentially, to prevent the world from slipping back into the clutches of political and economic chaos, there can be no capitalist class. There can be no so-called “free market” in charge of how people access basic amenities. The U.S. imperial regime, which has done so much to redistribute land and resources for herself and her allies the world over, must be dismantled, replaced by a global world order of governments seeking common solutions and health for the world’s majority, especially for those who’ve been often condemned to a life of immiseration and dysfunction due to the rise of the U.S. global regime.^[31]

Socialism brings us closer to ourselves as human beings, not as profit-seeking monsters, sometimes compelled by capitalism’s latent drive for more and more, to destroy ourselves and others. Trumps will certainly still show themselves in a socialist society, the art of dissent is still one that can be easily manipulated by nefarious forces claiming pluralism and “democracy”. But in a socialist world that seeks to uplift the historically exploited and oppressed, backed by governments that work tirelessly to help regulate society in ways that benefits the majority of such groups, not only shall the rightwing remain a tiny minority, but if they do start to boil and bubble over, will find no allies in higher institutions of management and governing. Instead, they will only find what we ourselves experience today, repression and the prioritization of positive public policies that value the oppressed and exploited, which include our right to control those elements that threaten us.

“Only the working-class revolution can save humanity, can carry humanity forward, can organise the enormous powers of production that lie ready to hand,” Dutt had stated, when optimism and pessimism clashed.^[32]

Examples of this future we can see glimmers of in countries such as Cuba, where healthcare remains a right, despite the brutal U.S. embargo.^[33] Or in places like Vietnam, a country that rebuilt itself, almost miraculously, following the brutal occupation of French and U.S. forces.^[34] China too, despite some of its flaws, represents forms of political thinking that can prove useful to the rest of the planet. As Covid-19 became reality, it was China's government that so swiftly directed the masses to construct hospital after hospital to care for its own.^[35] In America too, there have been fleeting moments but moments nonetheless of what can be possible. The early days of the Reconstruction era, as W.E.D. Du Bois examined in his classic *Black Reconstruction*, saw the federal government, for the first time in U.S. history, rise to the occasion in creating government programs and institutions that could provide basic schooling and healthcare to the masses, black and white, while having troops stationed across the confederacy to stifle emergent white supremacist rebellions and putsch.^[36] It was only when the federal government retreated from these stated objectives that the white supremacist gangs had taken over and conquered political power.

But what was done can be done again. There is no other choice anyway. It is either we, as Dutt states, "rise to the height of its task", of finding ways to generate the social movements that can create order and stability that people crave, and need, or we witness total devolution and chaos. Nothing is set in stone, yet. The waters haven't risen over our heads, not yet at least. But whatever we choose to do has to be done, very, very soon.

There will be no order and peace, or security, until the capitalist and the colonizer have been overcome.

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