

# FEMA, Capitalism, and Karl Marx's Crystal Ball

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The Bush administration began the dismantling FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) as one of the first orders of business when they reorganized the government under the Homeland Security Bill. What masquerades now as FEMA is a public relations smokescreen which disguises the fact that the government will no longer assist in major natural catastrophes. The "free market" approach to disaster requires that FEMA chieftains use their power and influence to divert taxpayer dollars towards private corporations which support the political establishment. "One hand washes the other" as the saying goes. This explains the logic of a self-perpetuating system which eschews public accountability and enriches the corrupt friends of the administration in an endless cycle of criminality and greed.

The neoliberal model, which is the doctrine to which the Bush administration rigorously adheres, does not accept that government should provide any goods or services to the public that can be produced by the private sector. All the traditional responsibilities of the state have been farmed out to private "for-profit" industry. This explains why FEMA has not taken part of even one, large coordinated relief-project in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In fact, there are still numerous stories that the agency is deliberately involved in subverting the relief effort. For all practical purposes, the agency does not exist. It has been replaced by a public relations chimera that produces articulate spokesmen and sham demonstrations for a defunct and powerless bureau.

The evacuation of Houston shows how FEMA has quickly adapted to its new role as part of the Bush "shadow government". FEMA didn't produce the evacuation plan that was required for an impending natural catastrophe. Nor did they care when the fleeing people of the region were stuck in traffic jams for more than 20 hours at a stretch.

Their goal was not to improve the situation but to create a wall of disinformation that would make the massive and predictable congestion look like a few unavoidable bottlenecks.

"Bottlenecks"?

FEMA responded by issuing confident statements through its surrogates in the right-wing media that the evacuation was going according to plan with "a few minor hitches."

This, in fact, is all anyone should expect from FEMA in the future. Their work is entirely limited to placing well-groomed spokesmen in front of a camera-lens to reiterate the soothing bromides that have been manufactured in Washington's many right-wing think tanks.

That's it. There is no other FEMA. Beyond the confident-sounding voice on the radio or the

male-model that issues slogans on the evening news the entire operation is a charade.

The message is simple: In times of trouble, you're on your own. If you're wealthy enough to escape, you'll be fine. Otherwise, expect to be corralled into feces-infested encampments; barricaded by the agents of the state.

Welcome to neoliberal America.

The military is not being used in the relief-effort either, although this is the latest fallacy propagated in the media. The military's role is simply to establish order, protect private property, and pave the way for the appearance of the mega-corporations that will be awarded the enormous "no-bid" contracts for reconstruction.

Weather-related disasters will soon replace war as a main source of revenue for America's ravenous corporations. Already, the usual faces have appeared at the public trough; Halliburton, Bechtel, Fluor etc. pushing their way to the head of the line to secure lucrative contracts from their political cronies in Washington. None of it has anything to do with salvaging lives or even restoration. It's simply a way for political kingpins to shift taxpayer dollars into the coffers of its constituents.

Have we seen any serious reconstruction in Iraq? How about that "Marshall Plan" in Afghanistan?

It's such a conspicuous ruse it's hardly worth disputing. The role of the media in this farce is to paper-over the obvious crimes of private industry and create a narrative of "resilient Americans lifting themselves up from tragedy". That's why the Bush administration spent an estimated \$62 million on public relations firms last year alone; although, given the performance of the corporate media, it probably wasn't necessary.

The military fits perfectly into this modern-paradigm of corporate cronyism and parasitic capitalism. The military provides a taxpayer-based security apparatus for private industry. As we've seen in New Orleans, they can handle the nettlesome task of ethnically-cleansing large groups of undesirables and clearing the path for the multi-national birds-of-prey to descend on their new victim. For the more difficult chores that require greater discretion; like intimidating the public, shaking down dissidents, or interrogating potential troublemakers; the widespread appearance of private mercenaries have become an invaluable asset.

Neoliberalism foreshadows the end of any meaningful concept of representative government. The state is simply an organizing tool for maximizing the profits of private industry and for maintaining the peaceful transfer of wealth from one class to another. It is a predatory system wherein only the most privileged and cunning can prosper. The Bush administration is the perfected-model of social Darwinism. The government is the thin gauze that conceals the rapacity of the corporate puppeteers. Behind the pasty-gray hologram of the "fly-over" President all the elemental forces of human greed and barbarity shine with ever-increasing luminosity. Global warming, peak-oil and endless, environmentally-devastating war, all point to the truth of Karl Marx's prediction that capitalism is scourge that eventually devours itself.

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