

The End of the Road for Capitalism or for Us All?

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Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

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"...we have the certainty that matter remains eternally the same in all its transformations, that none of its attributes can ever be lost, and therefore, also, that with the same iron necessity that it will exterminate on the earth its highest creation, the thinking mind, it must somewhere else and at another time again produce it". —

Frederick Engels, from the introduction to *'The Dialectics of Nature'*, 1883.

In 1945, following the second 'war to end all wars', or something like that, the people of Britain put their faith, at least temporally, in an alleged socialist, Labour government. A government that vowed that there would be no return to the 'bad old days' of prewar Britain. So we got the National Health Service, public housing, a nationalised transport system, even the canal network was nationalised (telecommunications was already a state-owned monopoly, the capitalists weren't prepared to risk *their* capital in its development).

It looked wonderful to (most) socialists didn't it. This was how 'socialism' was presented to us. In reality, there were two factors at work here. On the one hand there was indeed tremendous pressure from below, from organised labour, the socialist movement and working people in general, that indeed there would be no return to the bad old days of pre-war Britain. The future was Socialism!

But on the other hand, the reality was a technically bankrupt capitalist Britain, in debt up to its eyeballs to the new kid on the block, the USA and pretty much every major sector of the economy was broke from manufacturing to infrastructure development. Rationing didn't end until 1954. What better way to save capitalism from itself by getting the State to takeover the debt and get us to pay for it.

So nationalisation served two purposes; on the one hand it addressed/absorbed the peoples' demand for progressive change but without actually abolishing capitalism and on the other, it got the population to bailout a bankrupt capitalist economy. Brilliant! A masterstroke. Well that's how it appeared at the time.

All of this taking place with the backdrop of the hysteria and fear generated by anti-Communist propaganda, the Red Menace in the form of the Cold War and the desire by successive Labour/Tory governments to maintain what was left of our Empire, which in turn helped finance British 'socialism' would you believe. So we had 'socialism' at home and Imperialism abroad in the shape of our colonies and later, former colonies. And successive Labour governments were just as keen on it as successive Conservative governments. Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum.

In some respects it was a masterstroke by the political class and its servants, the permanent civil service, well for as long as it worked and it served the purposes for which it was created; the preservation of capitalism *and* imperialism.

Indeed, the programme worked, kind of until the first major, postwar crisis of capital at the beginning of the 1970s, the so-called energy crisis that upset the 'socialist' applecart.

In reality the 'Energy Crisis' reflected the rise of the anti-colonial struggles in the form of the oil rich countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran wresting back a measure of control over their natural resources, in turn, bailing out (again) the imperialist states with the petro-dollars that accumulated.

Coupled to this was yet another crisis of over-production that afflicts the 'advanced' capitalist economies with boring regularity, which in turn led to the attacks on organised labour, followed by the inexorable relocation of manufacturing to abundant sources of cheap labour in our former colonies as a means of maintaining the rate of profit for shareholders, culminating in the mid-1970s in what was effectively a return, not to pre-WWII conditions, but to *pre-WWI conditions!* The outrageously misnamed neoliberalism, the so-called free market agenda of the Reagan/Thatcher years, which lives on like a bad meal.

In the UK it was marked by the frontal assault and destruction of the biggest and most militant of trade unions, the National Union of Miners. Coal, the backbone of Industrial capitalism was now more readily and cheaply available overseas, assisted by the discovery of cheap North Sea oil, again for as long as it lasted.

Fast forward to the present (with a bunch of major economic crises, wars etc, along the way, each one bigger and badder than the last) and we are witnessing the disastrous end-product of capitalism. War, climate disaster, increasing impoverishment but now global in scope and what looks like the final nail in our planet-sized coffin, environmental disaster that's even got the ruling elites shitting in their expensive Armani pants.

So is that how we are going to let it end? Our childrens' teeth falling out before they're two? Our oceans filling up with plastic junk? Emptying the seas of fish. Disrupting and poisoning the natural processes by introducing genetically modified organisms into nature's life cycle? Destroying the health of our young (and old) by dumping 50,000-plus untested, novel chemicals into the food, air, water and the ground? Destroying forests in order to manufacture cardboard boxes for all the unwanted junk sitting in warehouses and shopping malls? Is this what it's come to? Is this democracy? Is this the 'free market' in action?

The reality is that this is the end-product of expand or die capitalism, where the bottom line is trillions for the shareholders and fuck all else for the rest of us except a poisoned home, unfit for *any* habitation! A planet-sized poisoned slum.

I opened this essay with Engels' prophetic quote, written 135 YEARS AGO would you believe! And unless we, the people call a halt to industrial capitalism now, and I mean right *now*, we *are* doomed as a species and we have also doomed our amazingly beautiful planet that took Nature billions of years to evolve in an intricate dance of physical, chemical and biological relationships.

My closest friend, and colleague, here in London, maintains that human intelligence is some kind of virus, an infection, citing the fact, and it is a fact, that the so-called lower animals don't destroy their environments, they don't kill each other and destroy their habitats with such abandon. And I can understand why he thinks the way he does when you look around you, although of course, I can't agree with him. Every now and again, we argue our respective cases with passion. Human intelligence is the product of Natural Evolution, in

response to the natural environment. Darwin's natural selection. Nature doesn't moralise. Nature is neither good nor bad, right or wrong, it just is. If you want to know why, please inquire elsewhere.

Capitalism on the other hand, is very much the product of our ruling classes, the class that owns and maintains private ownership of the major means of production for the benefit of the few. It's only 'natural' insofar that it's a product of human history, but it's not inevitable, it's not permanent, It's not the 'end of history' as some apologist for the mess we're in averred.

Amazingly, we *have* survived the most momentous century of our species short existence, the 20th, and by the skin of our teeth it would seem, but can we survive the 21st? Damn, can we survive the next 20 years let alone the next 80? I think the jury is out, at least until we arrest the miscreants and close their corrupt business down.

But what is absolutely clear, at least to me and to like-minded socialists, is that it's vitally important to resurrect, to reignite, to reinvent the socialist dream of the 19th and 20th centuries before it's too late. It's also time for us socialists, especially in the imperialist world to get our act together and stop playing at being revolutionaries and get *real*.

Thus far, it's the peoples' of our former (and current) colonies who have been doing most of the fighting, and dying, and in reality they're doing it for all of us! I don't believe in any kind of god but the idea that Jesus died for all of us, sums it up.

My dream is that before I die, I see at least a glimmer of real change, a sign that finally we, the so-called privileged of this world get our act together and rid our world of the parasites who prey on us, the 1% that we talk so glibly about. But you know, that without us buying into their world, they have nothing, no power in spite of their wealth, their weapons, their propaganda. It's only because we allow them, that they continue to rule.

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