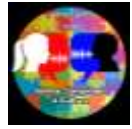


THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC REVEALS AN ABJECT FAILURE OF CAPITALIST STATE - WESTFALIAN STATE UNMASKED

SANTANU SENGUPTA

This write-up is more of a commentary on the most unprecedented developments of our time, the CORONAVIRUS Pandemic, its severely pervasive impact on every segment of human life transcending every continent turning the national borders superfluous. After the World War 2, this is undoubtedly the most cyclonic event has shaken the entire human civilization from its very edifice in the so-called post-modern and a period increasingly based on Capital-dominated artificial intelligence. And this storm of the Virus has hit the Earth when world is firmly under the globalized structure of a highly digitized and corporatized structure of a sovereign finance-led Capitalism. Having said this, the world also has an opportunity to see through this transformative event and pursue an alternative to the existing disposition of this world over. The colossal and disastrous impact of the Pandemic has pointed to clear questions as to whether the humanity anymore should cohabit with the long existing and inherently immoral and flawed profit-driven socio-economic system of Losers and Winners and as a system most chillingly unprepared or even negative to humanly and promptly respond to address the basic emergencies of society, particularly as when the inequalities and injustices long predated this crisis.

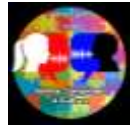
The mosaic of progressive ideas are now pressed to devise social political, economic and scientific plans to face the challenges of the time and charter a sustainable future of renewed prosperity. Most unprecedentedly, the Coronavirus Pandemic has forced the world into an uncertain space and time, every form of business and trade and services are suffering from serious unpredictability and looking at the future with utter hopelessness. Every till date-established systems, be it international, national or local are becoming fragile, leading to a most critical turmoil in human and society and it is proliferating in every human inhabited places and institutions. Politics is now hopelessly disrobed of its true directions. The entire power structure is utterly confused and itself has turned rudderless. Societies are showing all symptoms of heading towards a really anarchic time. State is trying out every effort and, in utter disregard, state is making efforts that is resulting in subversion of democratic rights and plural space of the people. Consequently, we are witnessing a competition among right-wingers and ultranationalists in promoting their sectarian agenda. Deep uncertainties and progressive visions



both spring out of such crisis situations. Regressive ideologies are based on dubiously imagined propaganda to perpetuate the objectives of ruling classes and privileged segments. Much hyped slogans like ‘The American Dream’, ‘Sun never sets in British Empire’ or ‘the Big Apple’ and one may argue even the ‘the China Dream’ are examples of such unscrupulous utopias only designed to promote Capitalism or Capitalism with a mercantilist tinge as well as racism and such other obscurantist ideas, in the process obscure socio-economic and political realities. It colors individual needs, dreams and priorities. It construes a unique blending of capitalism as economic system with totalitarianism and externally a clear expansionism. This capitalist utopia so far promised miserably failed to eradicate poverty and destitution despite its cleverly-woven tall promises of prosperity, rather accelerated marginalization and deprivation on an alarming scale.(1) Immeasurable Affluence and underprivileged has grown simultaneously. There’s no vision for people other than befooling propaganda of a dream life.

**PANDEMIC EXPOSED CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM AS
REGRESSIVE UTOPIA : NEGATES KARL POPPER’S SO-CALLED
OPEN SOCIETY ARGUMENT AND BEDEVILLING OF
UTOPIANISMS**

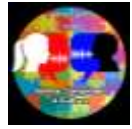
In human history, every time the masses have challenged the power structures, they were branded as ultras and criminals. To the elites of all hues, socialism, communism and secular collectivism, true democracy are all handed down a status of dangerous and destabilizing visions. History has ample evidence that every pro-people and progressive utopia has been more capable to steer the society clear of such or any crisis that the world is reeling under now. Thus, last 300 years’ history bear enough evidence that it’s the progressive utopias that take people on the road to change with a betterment. And it is only truly collective and emancipatory ideas that drives societies upward with a global vision and certainly not with any self-regarding design. Such wholesome programs and visions busts and unmask any philosophy based on concentration of power and privileges. This necessitates a very long-drawn battle of embedding of counter cultural awareness. Conservative-liberal philosopher Karl Popper’s relentless critiques of utopianism in his books ‘Utopia and Violence, Open Society and Its Enemies and The Poverty of Historicism basically helped in development of the philosophical foundation of rational choice in economics and neoliberal social and political philosophy to the detriment of the large majority of the underprivileged. In a capitalist structure, reason, freedom, ideal of so-called open society and open critical space are all illusive dreams as capital makes and unmake, shapes and reshapes everything as per its



overarching priorities. Every progressive Utopias are bedeviled and defamed. That's the way masses are socialized and institutionalized and forced to a hegemonizing dimension that negates the very arguments of Karl Popper. The ideas of Utopia drives human progress.(2) As Thomas Moore written in Utopia that the only authentic image of the future is, in the end, the failure of the present even after five centuries after Moore written the classic his words still sound prophetic. The liberal utopias sold by camouflaged capitalism are proven to be basically alluring dreams embedded in perpetual segmentation weaved in the abstractness of countless rules. In order to deal with people as they are capitalism tends to promote consumer culture and convert people into mere customers, convert social relationships into commodity-based exchange relationships and needs of people into desires. That turns in subtle ways individuals into seeking endless **desires** which in create socio-economic conditions for the enslavement of the objective reality, Labour. Today, in the face of a symbiosis of capitalism and rightwing politics, its long way off to create an alternative cultural counter to resist this all-pervasive structural control, as decades back pointed out by Jürgen Habermas.

UNMASKING THE THESIS OF 'THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE' – CAPITALIST DELUSIONS EXPOSED

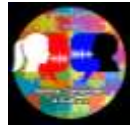
Today, the plight of the people and the unprecedented crisis caused by the spread of the Corona virus and the utter confusion of the capitalist state has really thrown open real ground for pressing for a radical transformation of the world and challenging the edifices of the contemporary dominant political economy. The continuous struggles for deepening of democracy, ensuring universal human rights or all, women's liberation, citizenship rights, rights of ethnic and religious minorities, ensuring a true and transparent justice system and an equal economic grounding were utopias at different points of history and are worth utopias even today, as the mission needs to be reenacted today. They were just not mere idealisms, they provide you the treaded paths of the past for us to imagine a better and more attainable future rejecting the present disposition of things. We badly require to put our mind and thoughts to frame and imagine the utopia in the light of the true meaning of our existence. That will enable us to throw away the Thesis of 'There is no Alternative' and unmask the unsustainability of the capitalist system. Utopias create the space for imagining the alternatives and presses the millions for change. Time today is even more relevant to put our imaginations for the yearning hope of millions for true freedom and prove the 'End of History ' a political thesis. Capitalist delusions are, by now, well exposed under the unprecedented Coronavirus Pandemic, it has exposed the chinks in its much-vaunted consumerist, so-called



invincible, amour. (3) The cruelty of the system has relegated human lives to mere numbers. The irreversible inequality has further accentuated the agonizing tale of millions in today's uncertain circumstances. We are far deeper pressed to look for aggrandizing mobilizations for a serious social, political, economic and cultural challenge to the rules and custodians of the status Quist forces.

PANDEMIC-IMPOSED GREATEST CRISIS IN HISTORY OF CAPITALISM: LOCKDOWN PROVES BY DEFAULTE THAT SOCIAL WEALTH IS A PRODUCT OF LABOUR, NOT BY CAPITAL ITSELF

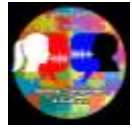
By a number of very recent confessions of World Bank and claims by many experts, this is indeed the greatest crisis in the history of capitalism. The Pandemic has imposed some sort of a pervasive general strike since the rise of capitalism, with at least half of the world's workforce is literally unemployed and the growth rate is fast racing towards a zero rate and this proves the Marxist dictum that social wealth is produced by productive labour and Not by capital itself. It is labour that creates value and out of that comes the accumulated capital and then labour is put to its subjugation. When labour goes on strike-in whatever conditions –as the way it has gone now, has clearly revealed the Marxist point. In the last few decades capitalism has produced a system that has cannibalized social and economic institutions in its desperation to ensure advantages to Capital. Globalization of production through huge supply chains that require metropolitan Capital to invest less and with fewer risks. This resulted in subcontractors to raise capital in their countries and are exposed to the risk of the system. On the other hand, the transnational corporations used their control on intellectual property and on supply chain to amass huge financial resources which they haven't put to any productive investment but to financial gambling's and SEZ-led Tax havens. And as result, states with inadequate funds were forced by these corporates and their cohort elites and also by their global institutional elites to take austerity measures against much-needed social institutions like public health and public medicine, transportation, education and institutions like old-age care and benefits. This gradual downsizing of public expenditure in health and medicines has wreaked havoc in most of the capitalist countries when Corona virus struck the world. As the capitalist state discarded the social orientation, snuffed away its welfarist moorings, it just did not have the wherewithal to come to the rescue of the people, spontaneous public action was also missing due to strong legal and political discouragement to Trade unionism.(4) The irony is people in the



capitalist countries are helplessly dependent on state's response, whereas in places like Vietnam, Cuba or state of Kerala of India several groups and organizations of society acted in concert with the actions of the state. It's now amply proved that the monopolistic, illiberal and monistic character of the contemporary capital and capitalism has dispossessed the society of its resilience where people are just not in a position to deal with a crisis like the present Pandemic.

**CAPITALISM RED-SIGNALLED: NEED MORE TO FOCUS ON
LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIES AND NOT GLOBAL WITH
WORKERS AND PEASANTS AT THE CORE OF THE SUPPLY-SIDE
OF ECONOMY**

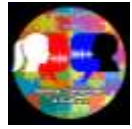
The banality of response of the state is to pour money into the control of the big business to accelerate liquidity while there was no dearth of liquidity. The crisis actually stemmed from the vanishing labour due to the imposed general strike. There was an employment and purchasing power crisis and no liquidity crisis. The state was painfully late to realize that labour force has to be kept alive and whatever relief is provided is on practical and realistic grounds. Developing countries now account for a debt to astronomical tune of \$11 Trillion. There should have been a cut on the debt. Otherwise that part of global South is going to dip into a cycle of indebtedness. The money should have gone to create a massive relief into that region as half the human population is now in is heading towards hunger and disaster. The people have to judge this crucial moment that every capitalist states, today, have abandoned the most humane duty of the state and governance. Most unabashedly, capitalism has worn such vulgar form today that which can roll out most incredibly sophisticated connecting devices, communication equipment or lethal combat aircrafts, but its does not know how best it is to wipeout tears of hunger from the face of the earth! That's as bad as complete illegitimacy of the system by the likes of Friedman, Hayek Rawls, Nozick or Fukuyama, shamelessly, a system that can flaunt of such stunningly flashy skylines in urban zones, can't ensure feeding the very people who are squeezed to ensure this ugly display of wealth possible. But where is the protest against such system that amasses so much wealth and technology but can't feed a squire meal to its Labour? The legitimacy of such a system is not in the sole custody of the constitution, nor in the views of its socio-cultural elites or the philosophers, the moral high ground is how the system takes care of its vast laboring majority, who are at the receiving end. The pandemic has further cleared the cloud, if any. Following Gramsci, its time, the balance of forces has to be changed, has got to be struck, and has to be redrawn, as capitalism is most terribly shaken, now! Out of wrong priority, another cardinal mistake



committed by capitalist state has been unabashedly doling out billions upon billions to the mighty corporations and providing relief to the genuine labour in most insufficient measure, and surveillance is being deepened by further undermining labour laws.(5) In a crisis, capitalist class always try to ensure its survival in the short-term and then make convenient use of weaknesses of the working majority to perpetuate its supremacy by framing policies. The policies framed by the state in India is such immorally crude as to extend the working hours in some cases to ten to twelve hours, thus taking things back to the 19th century capitalist domination. As the pandemic-led economic slump has almost signaled red light to capitalism, their typically convenient solution is to appropriate more money from the revenues of the state and extracting more of the surplus-labor time from the system. In such crisis situations, no capitalist state ever have shown any leanest possible benevolence. The capitalist state actually exaggerates and cultivates the human trait of greed and that organically gets nurtured into developing a cultural system of profit-maximization and a no-holds-barred cruel surge of capitals masked in a so-called competitive environment. The damage being done is enormous. Showing grave concern, WTO report states Global trade and investment is already down by more than 30%. As per report of the ILO, most alarmingly, more than 2.5 billion people are without earning and accounting for a whopping loss of \$3.4 Trillion. This woefully indicates that the supply chains that features the huge manufacturing is going to be badly hit soon. The entire bourgeoisie have got no idea as to how to get hold of this problem. The governments need to think over the following things: how to manage trades in such pandemic situations, transforming economic activity so that it does not remain dependent on global economy, focusing more on local and regional economies than on global economy, workers and peasants be made central part of the economy, etc. the first thing necessary is to make big spending on Public Health and in all its structures and human resources. That's why one witnesses the relative successes of Cuba, Vietnam or Kerala in India, with the difference in priorities and approaches.(6)

OUTGROWTH OF 'PLATFORM CAPITALISM'; INTENSIFYING EXPLOITATION DOWNWARD

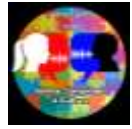
Exponential growth of "Platform Capitalism" alongside the exponential growth of Novel Corona Virus is another striking improvisation of high-tech based trading strategy adopted in making up for the presumed loss of business in the Pandemic situation. Jeff Bezos, owner of Amazon may well become World's first **Trillionaire** in a matter of few years. Already occupied considerable space of the retail market, during the Pandemic-led Lockdown Amazon took full advantages, with millions more people developed the taste of using this



platforms to buying their commodities. Many may never return to normal shops or even departmental stores with more and more goods and services are being traded this way via the web than through face-to-face retail system. However we should not exaggerate this while is fully under dense electricity and internet coverage, that's not exactly the case elsewhere in other continents. But, let us not underestimate the online Platform firms even in the South, they are likely to hard hit the traditional retail business houses of commodities and services as evidences are clearly indicating, subject to more clear survey, of course. The social nature of cities are welcoming this sort of trading and supplies taking full advantage of the social distancing protocol of the Pandemic. To add, the outgrowth of such Platform firms have a direct impact on downstream operators in the supply chains where firms like Amazons are able to dictate terms to their suppliers and that works down the ladder on to the security of the workers.(7)

EMERGING REORDERING OF WORLD'S GEOPOLITICS

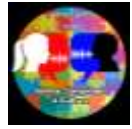
The Pandemic is perhaps leading to a reordering of world's Geopolitics and a possible strengthening of China with a determined multinational challenge to it and possible weakening of US hegemony. Peoples Republic of China is now not only home to world's manufacturing and huge surpluses to spread its commercial arrangements all over the world, it has also shown exemplary efficiency and deftness in handling the Corona Virus threat and containing it successfully by involving the Party as well as peoples organizations alongside the state agencies. But, question of course raised as how the Virus has spread to other counties and continents like wildfire and as to why the Chinese kept the detection and analysis of the Virus away from international community for a crucial time which has already has a devastating impact on the public health and trade and commerce across the continents. Because of the longer and deep economic implications, the West, led by the US, and many other powers across the world are most unhappy at this turn of events and also because China is fast emerging as a major technology power on set to deliver its science and technology for rapid promotion of its transnational capital. That's becoming a major problem to the US and the West to retain their hegemony in high-tech and capital. If China could become a major rival in high-tech areas like 5G, that will pose a real challenge to those areas, China may become a more potent threat to the US and WEST than the Soviets during the cold war, as Chinese r not only growing in transnational capital, they are also fast growing to become a major dual-use technological power. Obviously, it is in this critical context both sides are ready to go the whole hog and a trade war is being waged and every is effort



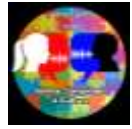
being planned to reorganize the huge supply chain away from China and in counter Chinese are trying desperately to expand their trades, aids and Infra-base ever wider across the entire Asian and African peninsula. American strategy is to fox the Chinese to troubles one upon the other in Asia so that their room and options to move beyond Asia gets far and few. Their strategic options to establish their growing expansion gets confined. China's intention is to set itself free of the US-dominated global system. The belligerence of both sides in South China Sea or in East China Sea, South Asian region, in the Indo-Pacific region or even in the Indian Ocean region are greatly alarming points and the future shape of great disharmonizing and anarchic world fast approaching. India too have been dragged into this dangerous vortex by both ambitious Chinese with their BRI plans and by the Americans to jeopardize Chinese objective building mammoth trade corridors across the length and breadth of Eurasia, Central Asia and the Middle East.(8)The ambition of a falling Great Power and another lurking power emerging has caught the rest of the Asians, in particular, in a crossfire.

ABJECT FAILURE OF CAPITALIST STATE TO SERVE CITIZENS; COMPLETE LACK OF RESILIENCE

Another interesting point is how the Pandemic is being dealt by the entire bourgeois world and just a handful of socialist regimes, be it from China to Vietnam to Kerala of India to Cuba to Venezuela. While the gripping Virus has the entire bourgeois states crumbled, on the other hand the social order under the socialist regimes appears more responsive. There is more bright light in the Left Democratic Govt. than from the entire G10 countries put together. The values of a society are not just in the constitution of it relishes, more so in its allocation of budgets; the budgets in the bourgeois countries have very deeply cut into the Health and education sectors. The crisis before us is not just the crisis of the Virus, but it is further aggravated by a health system that has been handed over to the private corporate entities for milking millions. We must also be working for the enormous number of unemployed marginal workers, the informal sector workers without any access to banking system or cash transfers by the Govt. those issues are just nonexistent in places and nations run and led by socialist regimes and values where the crucial priorities are just fundamentally different. The concept of '**failed state**' is long been used by World Bank, IMF and other development agencies. According to US Institute of Peace in 2004, spread of deadly disease is also a feature of a '**failed state**'. The Dutch Advisory Council identified 'failed state' as the impotency of the central government. Actually the Bourgeois intellectual long started using this term without understanding the validity of its core subjects but the think tanks and



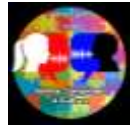
the academicians using such a discredited index to rank states in terms of their abilities and efficiency in dealing with different forms of crisis. The Corona Pandemic and failure of capitalist states gives us an opportunity to interrogate these ideas and expose its conceptual absurdity and empirical fallacies. The ‘failed state’ thesis were developed as a blistering critic of post-colonial states. The motivation was to undermine the southern states their development process and legitimacy in the eyes of their own citizens. The stages of economic growth, modernization and development theories was offered as alternatives within the Euro centric paradigm by ignoring the historical conditions and contemporary limitations. The idea of behind such a deceiving narrative was to hide the 200 years of imperialist and colonial plunders on these states. Further the neo colonial trade policies undermine the post-colonial states ability to engage with international trade and business on a competitive footing. In fact the terms of trade during the Pandemic has further widened this unequal exchange which has further led to the failure of post-colonial states in delivering public goods such as basic health and other communication transportation infrastructures. The predatory regimes and their cronies were promoted by their western powers and these were branded as failed states. Actually these concept was designed to create suitably intervene in these states to establish political regimes that helps the capitalist priorities of the west. However the Pandemic has established that the capitalist states like UK US and France abandon their constitutional responsibilities to protect citizens from the Covid 19 virus. In fact the consequent lockdown impels to rethink, reflect and reject the Euro centric ideological narratives of **WESTPHALIAN** nation states; capitalists to the core.(9) It is also the time to rewrite the ideological narratives of the so called success stories of western nations and their universalizing features of capitalism and liberalism as only alternatives. In reality capitalists states like USA Italy or England France Spain have not only failed to deal with the pandemic in fact the Trump’s administration learnt to have the making all efforts to ignore nutrition benefits for more than a million Americans who depend completely on such arrangements. The UK administration under Boris Johnson has failed to provide basic safety arrangements to the COVID-19 warriors. In fact most of the western capitalists are further weakening the working class by freezing the wages or removing benefits of pensions to cover the deficit due to Covid-19 crisis. So these ideal capitalists lack the moral compass. The capitalist’s states have miserably failed to protect their citizens from this pandemic. These **WESTPHALLIAN** states were formed to consolidate capitalism but they shockingly failed to face the challenges of pubic in this 2020 corona virus assault. The failure shows the limits of capitalists and fallacies or failed state as a concept. However the rise of radical rightwing of political parties and



nationalist of political parties is providing the breathing space to failed capitalists states. The popular discontent is externalized by conspiracy theories and their propaganda machine. The rise in tide xenophobia gives the capitalists states to hide their failures that undermines civil liberties. The emergency lockdown measures helps the capitalist's states to divert the democratic discontent and resistance. Destination has now become synonymous with death as an outcome of coronavirus Pandemic in the capitalists states. It has failed to respond to global health crisis and other impacts of the pandemic. The people are facing alienation and wide spread discontent for survival is growing. However, the dreadful days of Covid-19 pandemic someday will come to an end and people will take off their mask of fear but let's not forget to unmask the capitalist's states and their healthcare systems and discriminatory character of wealth distribution which has betrayed the masses. In fact atomized individualism promoted by capitalism has also been exposed during the unavoidable lockdown. All these forms of alienations are organic parts of capitalism has further aggravated the pandemic so therefore social and political unity, sense of collectivity sense of collectivity is the only alternative against capitalism. One must learn economy culture and politics all exist for the people and for the vast majority. These institutions are meaningless without the interest and survival of majority. Therefore we need to reflect on the directions on life economy politics and states. We can either opt for continuing with the priority of business as usual with capitalism at its core and suffer under its barbaric pandemic of deprivation and inequality. The other option is to break away from such a selfish and merciless system to priorities of collectivity and popular wellbeing. The people are up with a historic opportunity to exercise their option for the future. (10) The Covid-19 pandemic has provided the working masses an opportunity to alter the phenomena around to transform the state system and consign the remorseless capitalism of the privileged to flames forever.

CONCLUSION: TIME TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

For many the Pandemic has exposed the toxic effect of the neoliberal financial model which, peddled by the rightwing governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, has long accrued huge benefits to wealthy investors and hoarded profits at the expense of the undervalued and underprivileged also has long depleted public services turned education and healthcare services into profit-driven systems and aggravated further inequalities between people and countries, writes women's rights activist Nela Porobic Issakovic. This sentiment is also echoed by Marxist geographer David Harvey, who opined that forty years of neoliberalism has left the public entirely exposed to face an enormous public health crisis of gigantic proportions in the



form of a global Pandemic. The stupefying scope of neoliberal economics which stipulates minimal government interference in the economic activities has now been revealed by the Pandemic to the detriment of the common people. As the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left writes: “COVID-19 exposes the destructive legacy of neoliberalism”. One of the most defining examples of the impact of neoliberal capitalism that has had exacerbating the legacy of the global health crisis can be traced in the so-called GIG economy. The GIG model of employment, rather than innovative, increasingly seen at its core to be exploitative. This precarity of neoliberal business solution has been further revealed by the CORONAVIRUS Pandemic. (11)

Therefore, in the light of this we need to understand the fundamental difference between the socialist order and the nations run on bourgeois, as evident in the comparison of Vietnam and a rich capitalist country Italy which was convulsed by the Virus. In Vietnam, the positive role of political leadership, very decisive action undertaken by the state, major action by popular organizations, immediate relief to the working people under lockdown and a policy of cooperation with other countries, instead of xenophobia did wonders for nations and regimes like Vietnam. Therefore the plan of revival of the world economy and the immediate improvement of the vast working people in a post-Covid-19 world must be rooted in collectivist imagination. The abject failure of the capitalist regimes to contain the Pandemic is also rooted in its stealthily hidden greedy yet depriving social ethos and system. This disastrous hideousness of the social experience has to be torn apart now. The Corona Virus has laid bare a major weakness of most of the capitalist world: the low quality of their labour market. There’s virtually no compensation to the workers who kept the societies alive. Job security has long been threatened in the last 2-3 decades of Neoliberal, Neo-mercantilist dominance, but the gap between those ordering and those delivering it has been widened by the Pandemic. Labor’s share of income versus capital has further fallen owing to a declining union membership overall pie for workers is shrinking even as corporate profits has soared, unionized workers earn 13-15 percent more than the nonunionized workers. Workers are being largely prevented from negotiating higher wages. Such rising inequality is highly alarming for the economy and the social fabric. The great Depression sprang forth New Deal and more fundamentally the socialist uprising in the then Czarist Russia and across the continent of Europe, the World War 2 the NHS in the UK. That was only the beginning of the march of grand strides of a fundamentally different alternative dream of an Workers’ state of Socialist utopia and, on the other, to stem the rot from any further



downslide of capitalism, the Keynesian Welfare state induced with socially alleviating policies. The Covid19 Pandemic has created enough grounding to plan something equally daring to rescue the world and to empower the vast working people who are again at the receiving end of the most unprecedented crisis unfolding.

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