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What will it take to halt climate change? Socialism!

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China leads the world in production of solar energy panels.

Among the greatest threats to the people of the world today and our ability for future prosperity is the threat of human-caused climate change, including global warming. In the capitalist world, many in the media, political and business establishment call the concept a hoax because they economically benefit from the industries that are making the planet unlivable for human beings.

Yet in every socialist country, the ruling parties believe in the science of climate change and are taking steps to prevent it. In fact, the socialist countries are doing more to prevent it than many capitalist countries with far greater resources. Their systems of public ownership and planning are what give them the power to do it.

First, what is climate change? What causes it? And why is capitalism so bad at preventing it? What is referred to as “climate change” is the alternation of the planet’s climate caused by human activity. The main mechanism that causes this is the burning of fossil fuels, which release carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that traps the sun’s heat in the atmosphere and warms the planet.

At the dawn of the industrial revolution, the water power of rivers was used to supply energy to the new factories spinning cloth in England. But before long, steam engines that burned coal replaced the rivers as the primary source of energy. Eventually, electricity was discovered, but the primary source of energy to make electricity was still coal, a very dirty and polluting form of energy, and [it remains one of the largest sources of energy](#), today augmented by oil and natural gas.

Due to hundreds of years of infrastructure and development, coal and other fossil fuels are at the center of so much of the industrialized world and represent some of the cheapest forms of energy, despite their continued use spelling doom for human civilization. Because capitalism is only concerned with profit, using the cheapest method will always be chosen over anything else, and the future of the planet or

welfare of the workers is of no concern for the owners of capital.

The economies of socialist societies, however, are based on planning and public ownership rather than private control by a small wealthy class. These societies can make strategic investments that prioritize other goals rather than the immediate maximization of profit, and preserving the environment and preventing climate change is one of these goals.

China turns to renewable energy

Despite having the largest share of total carbon emissions as a country, the People's Republic of China has a per capita emissions rate that is half that of the United States, while having a greater gross domestic product when adjusted for local purchasing power. During the first decade of the 2000s, the Communist Party of China made fighting pollution a national policy goal. To this end, China poured vast sums of money and national resources into several critical areas of clean energy.

The solar panel and wind turbine markets used to be relatively small and products were expensive, but China invested billions of dollars into massive facilities for the production of solar panels and wind turbines. Within a few years, the costs of these products fell tremendously, with solar panel costs [falling as much as 80 percent](#). These investments were made for the strategic reason of fighting climate change, and they go beyond the capitalist logic of maximizing profits. The state purposefully ramped up production in order to fulfill a human need.

China has also been the nation leading the world in [deployment of new nuclear power plants](#), a form of energy that produces no carbon pollution. According to the World Nuclear Association, China has 47 plants currently in operation, 12 under construction and 168 in the planning stages. These new power plants are of modern designs quite different from those in the United States, mostly built in the 1970s.

They incorporate many passive safety features to prevent meltdowns such as those that occurred at Chernobyl and Fukushima, requiring no human intervention to prevent disaster. Some reactors in the research stages are even proposed to [run on alternative fuels](#) such as thorium and be cooled by liquid metals like sodium instead of water, offering further increased efficiency and safety.

Nuclear power has been shunned by most countries of the capitalist West for decades. The high upfront costs represent too high of a risk to the private monopoly banks of Wall Street despite their high lifetime output and lack of carbon emissions. A powerful and righteous anti-nuclear movement rebelled against dangerous capitalist abuses of nuclear energy and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Socialist China, however, believes it can use its collective wealth to plan for the long term and build these power plants safely with the goal of accommodating growth in a way that prevents pollution.

Groundbreaking efforts in Cuba

While the People's Republic of China is the socialist country with the largest economy and most resources at a national level, other socialist countries have made their own contributions to fighting climate change. Many of these efforts were undertaken out of necessity due to the countries' positions as nations oppressed by U.S. imperialism, but embraced for the positive effects they have brought about.

In the 1990s, Cuba went through an incredibly difficult time in what is called the "Special Period" after the dismantling of socialism in the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the state. Nearly overnight, Cuba's largest trading partner was no more and, due to the U.S. imposed blockade, foreign imports of oil and fertilizers were no longer available to the island nation. They had to innovate in order to survive and in the process reduced their dependence on fossil fuels.

With fuel to run tractors and trucks in short supply, agricultural products on large farms became difficult to harvest and ship to the population in cities. In response, the Cuban government began practicing intensive urban farming on state-owned plots in the cities.

These “Organipónicos,” as they are known, are cultivated with advanced organic methods to increase yields without synthetic fertilizers and because the fields are already in the cities, the amount of fossil fuels needed to be burned to transport them is greatly reduced.

Cuba, known internationally for its sugar production, also uses the waste from the harvest to reduce their fossil fuel usage in ways that are uncommon in capitalist countries. By locating power plants designed to burn the waste products of sugar refining in major agricultural areas and near refineries, Cuba has tapped into an [efficient and renewable form of electricity](#) that avoids fossil fuels.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) also went through its own period of intense hardship in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, known there as the “Arduous March.” They, too, were cut off from oil imports and fertilizers.

The issue in the DPRK became how to irrigate their fields without oil to run the pumps that supplied water to the fields. In response, the country launched a popular campaign to [construct massive dams](#) in the mountains of the country which would allow stored water to flow downhill to the fields via gravity instead of using pumps. These dams were constructed mostly without the assistance of heavy machinery and represented a countrywide mobilization of the people to improve the country.

Additionally, Vietnam faced great devastation at the hands of the U.S. military during the 1960s and 1970s, including chemical warfare in the form of Agent Orange and other toxic compounds that killed many Vietnamese people and much of their natural environment. Since then, under the guidance of the socialist

government, the nation has [planted millions of trees](#), which not only clean the air but also sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in the forest.

These examples are just some of the ways that the world's socialist societies have taken steps to preserve the environment and which reduce their contribution to global climate change. To be sure, none of these societies are examples of the full potential for humanity to live with minimal harmful impacts on the environment. However, their actions show that their social systems based on public ownership of the principal means of production and long-term planning are the basis for the all encompassing action that is needed to prevent disastrous climate change.

If these countries can do so much good with so much less wealth than that held by the United States, what could we do if we got rid of the bankers and CEOs that rule this country and decided to use our wealth for human needs, including preventing climate change?

