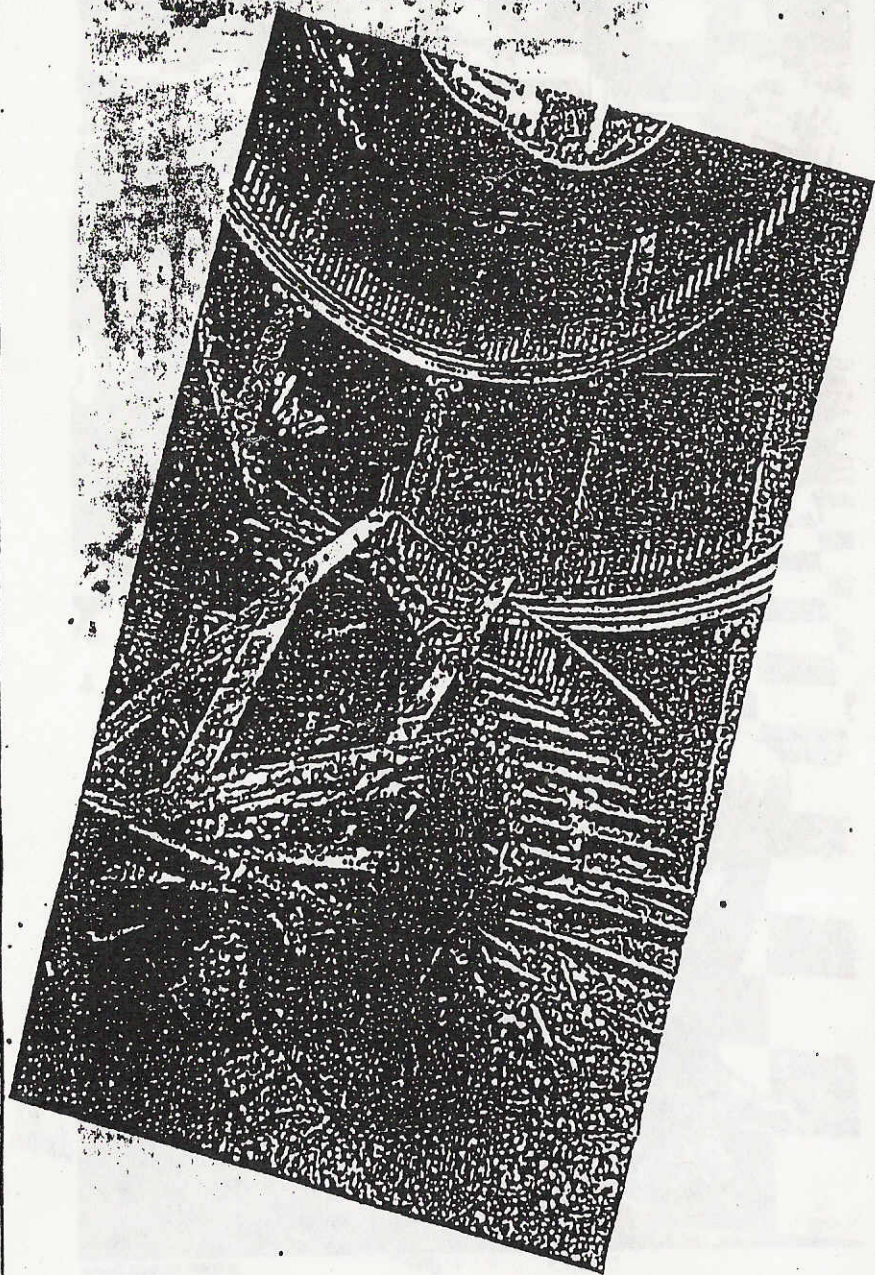


CIVILIZATION IS COLLAPSING...



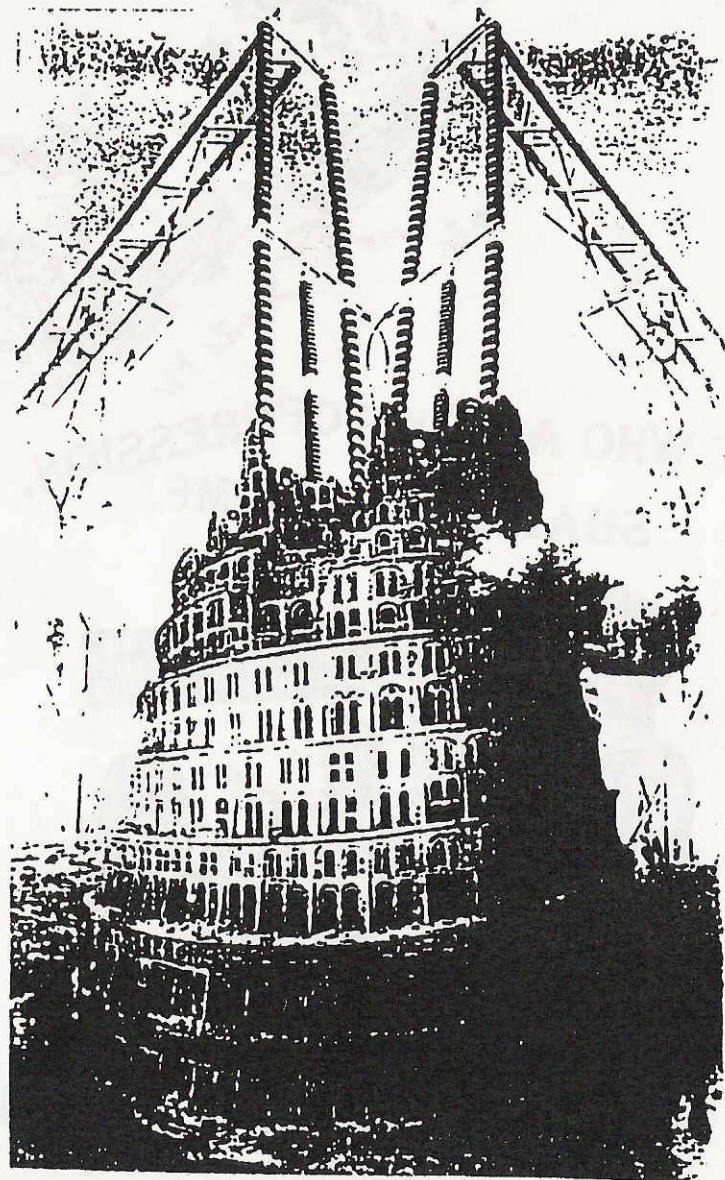
LET'S GIVE IT A PUSH...

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We All Live In Bhopal

An essay against the Empire by David Watson



BEWARE: The consequences of Industrial Civilization are deadly.

This essay
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"HE WHO ALLOWS OPPRESSION,
SHARES THE CRIME."



Peace. Freedom. **A**narchy.



Johnn Humyn Beng

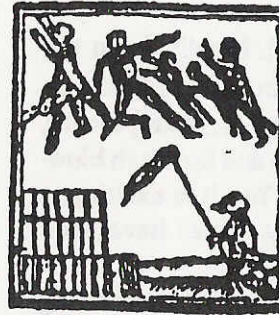
plant and the people's presence there are certainly compelling; capitalist market relations and technological invasion are as compelling as a hurricane to the small communities from which those people were uprooted. It conveniently failed to note, however, that countries like India do not import the benefits of industrial capitalism; those benefits are exported in the form of loan repayments to fill the coffers of the bankers and corporate vampires who read *The Wall Street Journal* for the latest news of their investments. The Indians only take the risks and pay the costs; in fact, for the immiserated masses of people living in the shantytowns of the Third World, there are not risks, so much as certain hunger and disease, and the certainty of death squad revenge for criticizing the state of things as they are.

Industrialization a nightmare

In fact, the Calcutta-style misery is the result of Third World industrialization and the so-called industrial "Green Revolution" in agriculture. The Green Revolution, which was to revolutionize agriculture in the "backward" countries and produce greater crop yields, has only been a miracle for the banks, corporations and military dictatorships which defend them. The influx of fertilizers, technology, insecticides and bureaucratic administration exploded millennia-old rural economies based on subsistence farming, creating a class of wealthier farmers dependent upon western technologies to produce cash crops such as coffee, cotton and wheat for export, while the vast majority of farming communities were destroyed by capitalist market competition and sent like refugees into the growing cities. These victims, paralleling the destroyed peasantry of Europe's Industrial Revolution several hundred years before, joined either the permanent underclass of unemployed and underemployed slum-dwellers eking out a survival on the tenuous margins of civilization, or became proletarian fodder in the Bhopals, Sao Paulos and Djakartas of an industrializing world — an industrialization process, like all industrialization in history, paid for by the pillage of nature and human beings in the countryside.

Food production goes up in some cases, of course, because the measure is only quantitative; some foods disappear while others are produced year round, even for export. *But subsistence is destroyed.* Not only does the rural landscape begin to suffer the consequences of constant crop production and use of chemicals, but the masses of people — laborers on the land and in the teeming hovels growing around the industrial plants — go hungrier in a vicious cycle of exploitation, while the wheat goes abroad to buy absurd commodities and weapons.

CIVILIZATION IS LIKE A JETLINER



Civilization is like a jetliner, noisy, burning up enormous amounts of fuel. Every imaginable and unimaginable crime and pollution had to be committed in order to make it go. Whole species were rendered extinct, whole populations dispersed. Its shadow on the waters resembles an oil slick. Birds are sucked into its jets and vaporized. Every part, as Gus Grissom once nervously remarked about space capsules

before he was burned up in one, has been made by the lowest bidder.

Civilization is like a 747, the filtered air, the muzak oozing over the earphones, the phony sense of security, the chemical food, the plastic trays, all the passengers sitting passively in the orderly row of padded seats staring at Death on the movie screen. Civilization is like a jetliner, an idiot savant in the cockpit manipulating computerized controls built by sullen wage workers, and dependent for his directions on sleepy technicians high on amphetamines with their minds wandering to sports and sex.

Civilization is like a 747, filled beyond capacity with coerced volunteers — some in love with the velocity, most wavering at the abyss of terror and nausea, yet still seduced by advertising and propaganda. It is like a DC-10, so incredibly enclosed that you want to break through the tin can walls and escape, make your own way through the clouds, and leave this rattling, screaming fiend approaching its breaking point. The smallest error or technical failure leads to catastrophe, breaking all your bones like egg shells and scattering your sad entrails like belated omens over the runway.

Of course civilization is like many other things besides jets — always things — a chemical drainage ditch, a woodland knocked down to lengthen an airstrip or to build a slick new shopping mall where people can buy salad bowls made out of exotic tropical trees which will be extinct next week. Or perhaps a graveyard for cars, or a suspension bridge which collapses because a single metal pin has shaken loose. Civilization is a hydra. There is a multitude of styles, colors, and sizes of Death to choose from.

Civilization is like a Boeing jumbo jet because it transports people who have never experienced their humanity where they were to places where they shouldn't go. In fact it mainly transports businessmen in suits with briefcases filled with charts, contracts, more mischief — businessmen who are identical everywhere and hence have no reason at all to be ferried about. And it goes faster and faster, turning more and more places into airports, the (un)natural habitat of businessmen.

It is an utter mystery how it gets off the ground. It rolls down the runway, the blinking lights along the ground like electronic scar tissue on the flesh of the earth, picks up speed and somehow grunts, raping the air, working its way up along the shimmering waves of heat and the trash blowing about like refugees fleeing the bombing of a city. Yes, it is exciting, a mystery, when life has been evacuated and the very stones have been murdered.

But civilization, like the jetliner, this freak phoenix incapable of rising from its ashes, also collapses across the earth like a million bursting wasps, flames spreading across the runway in tentacles of gasoline, samsonite, and charred flesh. And always the absurd rubbish, Death's confetti, the fragments left to mock us lying along the weary trajectory of the dying bird — the doll's head, the shoes, eyeglasses, a beltbuckle.

Jetliners fall, civilizations fall, this civilization will fall. The gauges will be read wrong on some snowy day (perhaps they will fail). The wings, supposedly de-iced, will be too frozen to beat against the wind and the bird will sink like a millstone, first gratuitously skimming a bridge (because civilization is also like a bridge, from Paradise to Nowhere). A bridge laden, say, with commuters on their way to or from work, which is to say, to or from an airport, packed in their cars (wingless jetliners) like additional votive offerings to a ravenous Medusa.

Then it will dive into the icy waters of a river, the Potomac perhaps, or the River Jordan, or Lethe. And we will be inside, each one of us at our specially assigned porthole, going down for the last time, like dolls' heads encased in plexiglass.



there
really
is
a
fire
out
there

PROTECT THE EARTH

WE ALL LIVE IN BHOPAL



The cinders of the funeral pyres at Bhopal are still warm, and the mass graves still fresh, but the media prostitutes of the corporations have already begun their homilies in defense of industrialism and its uncounted horrors. Some 3,000 people were slaughtered in the wake of the deadly gas cloud, and 20,000 will remain permanently disabled. The poison gas left a 25 square mile swath of dead and dying, people and animals,

as it drifted southeast away from the Union Carbide factory. "We thought it was a plague," said one victim. It was: a chemical plague, an industrial plague,

Ashes, ashes, all fall down!

A terrible, unfortunate, "accident," we are reassured by the propaganda apparatus for Progress, for History, for "Our Modern Way of Life." A price, of course, has to be paid since the risks are necessary to ensure a higher Standard of Living, a Better Way of Life.

The Wall Street Journal, tribune of the bourgeoisie, editorialized, "It is worthwhile to remember that the Union Carbide insecticide plant and the people surrounding it were where they were for compelling reasons. India's agriculture has been thriving, bringing a better life to millions of rural people, and partly because of the use of modern agricultural technology that includes applications of insect killers." The indisputable fact of life, according to this sermon, is that India, like everyone else, "needs technology. Calcutta-style scenes of human deprivation can be replaced as fast as the country imports the benefits of the West's industrial revolution and market economics." So, despite whatever dangers are involved, "the benefits outweigh the costs." (December 13, 1984)

Another event of such mammoth proportions as those of Bhopal would suggest otherwise — in that case, industrial pollution killed some 4,000 people in a large population center. That was London, in 1952, when several days of "normal" pollution accumulated in stagnant air to kill and permanently injure thousands of Britons.