# Ghost of Che Guevara

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#### Capitalist medical systems are in crisis – Covid-19 has laid bare the foundational contradictions within the structure of pharmaceuticals – private corporations use patent protections thru the WTO to stifle innovation while raking in massive profits at the expense of the globally dispossessed.

Attard ‘20

[Joe, Marxist and writer for several revolutionary publications. 03/24/2020. “Pandemics, profiteering and big pharma: how capitalism plagues public health,” <https://www.marxist.com/pandemics-profiteering-and-big-pharma-how-capitalism-plagues-public-health.htm>] pat

The majority of pharmaceutical R&D funding comes from the private sector, which accounted for 67 percent of a total $194.2bn invested in the US health sector in 2018, compared to 22 percent by federal bodies and 8 percent by academic and research institutes. Pharmaceutical companies use these high R&D costs as justification for boosting prices of older and generic drugs, to the point that essential medicines like insulin can cost $25 to $100 a vial in the States. In 2015, the president of Turing Pharmaceuticals, Martin Shkreli, caused a scandal by increasing the cost of Daraprim (a drug used in the treatment of AIDS-related conditions) from $13.50 to $750 per pill. Despite the excuse that such windfalls are reinvested in drug development, the vast majority of new medicines are produced by state-funded or subsidised research: including the new candidate vaccine for COVID-19. Rather than advancing medical research and innovation, private pharmaceutical companies mostly use their financial clout to amass patents on medicines developed with public money, flog derivatives of existing drugs at inflated prices and churn out lifestyle drugs like viagra. By using these practices (and benefitting from a liberalisation of anti-monopoly laws in the 1990s), pharmaceuticals became the fastest-growing and highest-profit legitimate industry on earth by the turn of the millenium, raking in $1.2tn USD in 2018 alone.

With so much easy money flowing in, private pharmaceutical companies have little interest in developing new vaccines on their own initiative – especially for active epidemics. The mechanism by which viruses live and propagate is poorly understood by science. Diseases like coronavirus also mutate very quickly into new strains. Vaccine development is a difficult, expensive and time-consuming process, in which returns are never guaranteed. Trevor Jones, director of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, claimed that it costs $500 million to research and develop a new drug, and drug companies expect to earn back that investment within the first three to five years of sales. The last “blockbuster vaccine” produced in the private sector was Merck’s Gardasil, for use against HPV, which came out in 2006 after a 20-year development cycle. Forbes recently reported on the industry’s “innovation crisis”, outlining the main contradiction at the heart of this sector: profits are going up, but the number of new drugs and vaccines is going down:

“Failing productivity seems like a strange problem in an industry that generates more cash than it can deploy, enjoys unlimited demand and wields monopolistic pricing power. But pharma is not a ‘normal’ business. Each new drug, each clinical trial is an experiment. Development is inherently unpredictable, as reflected in a success rate of 2%... [A] review of data on changes in the value of drugs and industry revenues between 1995 and 2014 did not show the predicted decline. The productivity problem stems not from constraints on opportunity [but] rising costs.”

In short, developing new medicines presents too high of a risk and not enough of an assured profit, meaning drugs companies are devoting their resources to more lucrative avenues, and doing very well. At the same time, private pharma uses its oligarchic power to hamper the development and manufacture of new drugs by anyone else, including the state. The result is that, while the capitalists are still raking it in, the market has left us ill-equipped to deal with crises like the COVID-19 outbreak.

Contradictions and crisis

With the private sector dragging its feet, many attempts have been made to build up state-run medical R&D. But while state research has received more funding in the advanced capitalist countries in recent years, it still only commands about 5 percent of total spending in the USA, for example. By contrast, military spending takes up 54 percent. And the immense power of the pharmaceutical oligarchy means it can bend government bodies to its will if they conflict with the bottom line. The state doesn’t dictate to capital, but vice versa.

The last time the US government approved a national vaccination programme was for swine flu in 1976. Four drug firms – Merck’s Sharp & Dohme, Merrell, Wyeth and Parke-Davis – refused to sell to the government the 100 million doses of the vaccine they had manufactured until they got full liability indemnity and a guaranteed profit. And shortly before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) raised $750bn to expedite the development of vaccines to treat new epidemics, with support from countries like Japan, Germany, Canada etc. But private drugs companies on CEPI’s scientific advisory panel (including Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer and Takeda) forced the organisation to back down on the principle that “all countries would have equal and affordable access to CEPI-funded vaccines”. This ensured the capitalists would still be able to turn a healthy profit on any vaccines developed through this fund, in any foreign market.

Two of the biggest impediments to progress in the field of medical research are also the two biggest fetters on the development of capitalist society in general: the nation state and private property. The rise of protectionist tendencies worldwide also affects the drugs market, with nations jealously concealing the results of their latest pharmaceutical research – both state-funded and private. During this COVID-19 crisis, these tendencies have been accelerated. World leaders are hunkering down behind their borders, refusing to share essential resources to fight the pandemic. The Serbian president recently decried the “fairytale” of European solidarity, given the EU laws that prevent the movement of doctors and key medical supplies to non-Schengen countries. He then announced Serbia’s own borders closed to “foreigners”. In truth, solidarity between the Schengen countries has also broken down, with Germany at first banning the export of desperately needed facemasks to countries like Italy. 21 of the 26 Schengen nations have now closed their borders, posing an existential threat to the EU. This madness is the product of a senile system, which has descended into in-fighting precisely when unity is most needed. Viruses know no borders, and the lack of international coordination severely hampers our ability to respond to pandemics.

Recently, students at the University of Sheffield sequenced whole genomes of the coronavirus from UK patients, and are set to make their research public. This is a remarkable achievement that arose from state-subsidised academia. However, there is now a race to develop a vaccine based on such research, and by various governments to secure exclusivity. First into the dog pile was US President Donald Trump, who followed his ‘America First’ maxim by offering the German biopharmaceutical company CureVac “large sums of money” for exclusive rights to a COVID-19 vaccine and antiviral agents. The German government has apparently met this move with a counter-offer. This could potentially set off a bidding war, which will force millions of people and state health services to buy vaccines at prices set by the winner.

Under a planned world economy, all of the planet’s resources could be pooled into developing an effective treatment and vaccine for COVID-19. But the antagonised interests of capitalist nations prevent this. Attempts to overcome these antagonisms on a capitalist basis have met with little success. For instance, the WHO operates the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework, which facilitates the sharing of medical research between nations. But it only applies to influenza, not any other infectious disease with pandemic potential, due to pressure from the industry and governments. Indeed, the WHO itself is a shadow of its lofty objectives. Its funding has been cut in half by the Trump administration, it is rife with rumours of corruption, and has been supplanted by the World Bank as the biggest financier of public health globally. Similar bodies like the Centres of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have also seen their budgets slashed in recent years: casualties of the protectionist tendency in the world markets.

Furthermore, private-sector medical companies consider their products (whether they actually developed them, or merely purchased the patents) to be their private possessions: valuable only for their market potential, not their capacity to cure people. Recently, a private company threatened with legal action two volunteers who were 3D-printing valves for use in ventilators, selling them for $1 against a typical market price of $11,000. This kind of private sector parsimony is replicated across the international pharmaceutical market. For example, the 1994 Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) guarantees IP protection for all companies, including pharmaceutical firms, when selling their products in any WTO country. This proves problematic in poorer countries, where essential drugs are the intellectual property of private companies, whose exorbitant prices are too high for these markets, and who resist attempts to produce cheaper derivatives domestically. In response to this problem, in 2001 (on the initiative of the WHO), the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health – agreed by all WTO Member States – affirmed that public health should always take precedence over the enforcement of intellectual property rights. However, according to Oxfam in 2019: “rich countries and pharmaceutical companies have ignored the Doha Declaration and pursued an aggressive agenda to subject the developing world to even stricter IP protection, through free-trade agreements and unilateral pressure.” In short, powerful nations will always crush the weak, and the private property rights of the capitalists always trump human need.

A recent statement by the British government inadvertently exposed the failure of the so-called free market to ameliorate this pandemic. The Tory administration has banned the parallel export of 80 drugs (including Aluvia, adrenaline and morphine), due to speculation by private companies, which were attempting to buy the drugs cheaply in Britain, then hoard and sell them at an inflated price abroad. This hasn’t been prohibited because it is ethically unacceptable, but because the government was afraid it would “aggravate supply problems”.[31] It has also transpired that the US firm Rising Pharmaceuticals increased the price of chloroquine (an antimalarial, which is being tested against COVID-19) on 23 January, when the scale of the outbreak in China became apparent. The drug price rose 97.86 per cent to $7.66 per 250mg pill and $19.88 per 500mg pill. Although the PR backlash led them to quickly return the cost to the ‘normal’ market rate, Rising has previously been fined for price fixing, and it is clear they intended to exploit the suffering of millions of people to score a windfall.[32] This won’t be the last time a company seeks to turn a quick buck on the coronavirus pandemic.

Contrast this with Cuba’s production and distribution of Interferon alfa 2b: developed in 1986 by the state-run BioCubaFarma in collaboration with China. This drug, which can help stop some of the symptoms of coronavirus, has been tested with positive results on 1,500 coronavirus patients in China already. Cuba has shipped Interferon in large quantities to badly-affected countries like Italy. Teams of Cuban doctors have also been sent to dozens of countries to help fight outbreaks. It is a clear testament to the superiority of a planned economy that a small Carribean Island can produce an effective treatment for a disease that resists the best efforts of the mightiest capitalist countries on earth, and freely send medical resources to those in need. Similarly, whereas for-profit pharmaceutical companies have dropped research into complex conditions like Alzheimer’s disease due to a lack of returns, Cuba’s state-run medical research has produced some exciting breakthroughs against both Alzheimer’s and HIV.[34] Needless to say, the trade embargoes imposed on Cuba by the US will be an obstacle to any of these potentially life-saving treatments reaching the people who need them, and there will be consequences for any US trade partners who accept them.

The limitations of the capitalist system mean that medical R&D on vaccines for serious, life-threatening diseases have been basically stagnant since the 1960s. Humanity is increasingly vulnerable to global epidemics (for reasons I will explain), and our weapons to resist them are becoming obsolete. The pharmaceutical industry is privatising the profits of this essential sector, and socialising the risks. And capitalist governments are facilitating them. An infectious disease researcher interviewed in the New York Times recently opined: “What matters more to the drug companies? Keeping trade secrets and boosting the bottom line or taking a leading role in stemming the COVID-19 outbreak?” The answer is clear as day. A crisis like the current pandemic offers no better argument for placing these unproductive parasites under democratic control so their immense resources can be put to good use.

The poorest suffer most

So far, COVID-19 has only just hit the least-developed countries. The first confirmed cases have recently been reported in Somalia and Tanzania. Another was detected in the Gaza Strip. The virus will inevitably spread, and when it does, the results will be catastrophic. How can a country like Somalia – which barely has a functioning government, and whose housing and sanitation are in a miserable state – carry out social distancing measures or subsidise lost wages? How will its medical infrastructure cope with thousands of infected patients? And aside from these poor countries, what happens when the thousands of Middle-Eastern refugees living in tents in European migrant camps become infected? The answer is obvious. There will be no containment, there will be no concerted medical response. People will be left to fend for themselves. This state of affairs is merely par for the course when it comes to disease prevention in underdeveloped nations.

Less than 10 percent of global health research public spending is dedicated to diseases that affect the poorest 90 percent of the world population. Deadly diseases like HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis thrive in poor countries. Neglected tropical diseases kill 500,000 people in the developing world every year. And if private drugs companies see scant financial incentive in developing medicines for the advanced capitalist countries, they see none at all in the poorest nations. Dr. Harvey Bale Jr., head of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, asserted that there was “no marketplace to speak of in the poor world”. Dr. Bernard Pécoul of the Médecins Sans Frontières added that the push for profits “leaves you focused on 300 to 400 million people in rich countries.” This is a very clear example of where production for profit is grossly misaligned with need.

To give an example, in the late ‘90s, the genome for tuberculosis was sequenced. TB causes terrible suffering in the poorest parts of the world. Despite the WHO organising a 1998 summit to gain the support of leading pharmaceutical companies to develop a vaccine and treatments, none of these companies was willing to commit to any project that would realistically yield profits of less that $350m a year or five years or more. That would have required a total cost of $11 USD per pill, per patient in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, which at the time spent less than $10 USD per citizen, per year, on all healthcare needs. In short, private pharma refused to commit any of its resources to alleviating the suffering of poor nations unless they accomplished the impossible. The project was abandoned. And aside from a lack of investment in R&D, many private firms have abandoned production of existing, important drugs for the developing world, including five treatments for African sleeping sickness, aminosidine for the parasitic disease leishmaniasis and even the polio vaccine. Far from advancing human society in the fight against illness, capitalism is actually taking us backwards.

International bodies like the WHO and the G8 have attempted to incentivise private sector investment in the poor world with subsidies like Advanced Market Commitments (AMC), through which advanced capitalist countries agree to meet some of the costs of getting affordable vaccines to where they’re needed most. Alternatively, the US Food and Drug Administration offers vouchers that can be exchanged for fast-tracked reviews of any future product to companies that develop effective medicines for neglected diseases.[44] But all of these rewards have failed, either because they don’t provide enough of an incentive, or because pharmaceutical companies have found ways to game the system and enrich themselves even further. For instance, by applying the aforementioned voucher to the anti-malarial medicine Coartem, Novartis accrued an additional profit of $321m solely for registering their product with the US FDA, even though the medicine is already in widespread use elsewhere.

The only value private pharma sees in the developing world is a testing lab to outsource its clinical trials, which represent the single-biggest cost of drug development. This cost can be significantly off-set by exploiting test subjects in places like India, where clinical trials have created a thriving market. Better yet, these firms can often avoid disagreeable red tape like ethical standards and informed consent by moving these operations to countries where regulations are looser, and turning desperate people into their lab rats.

Some poorer countries have sought to offset rising drug costs by investing in their own pharmaceutical manufacture and distribution channels, at the cost of deepening their foriegn debt. However, these efforts have been frustrated by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers’ Association (the industry’s main bosses’ organisation), which feels this represents an “infringement on their free market rights.”[48] From 2008 to 2018, an Intergovernmental Working Group on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights (IGWG) has sought to address the demands of developing countries for a global system of R&D that better reflects their needs. But its recommendations have been totally ignored by both imperialist countries and private pharma. The situation was summed up in a damning report by Oxfam:

“The lack of medical innovation is a global problem which requires a significant increase in resources, applied in an effective and coordinated manner. The current system of R&D under-utilises the capacities, skills, and resources available in all countries. Efforts to improve R&D across the developing world are fragmented, unsustainable, and unlikely to lead to large-scale changes.”

Despite the complaints of Oxfam and the IGWG, you can’t change the rules of capitalism by appealing to the capitalists’ better nature. If there’s no profitable market, they won’t invest. The reforms they propose would require a fundamental break with the current system. Naturally, research on life-saving treatments for illnesses that afflict the developing world would also have a positive impact on the development of vaccines and treatments in the advanced capitalist countries. But the market system only thinks about immediate returns. Human lives are small change.

#### Neoliberalism is unsustainable and causes extinction – multiple intertwined crises make collapse inevitable which means its try-or-die – we got charts!

von Weizsäcker and Wijkman ‘17

Ernest Ulrich von Weizsäcker, Professor and Director of the United Nation Centre for Science and Technology for Development, Founder and President of the Wuppertal Institute, Member of the German Bundestag, chairing the Committees on Globalization and the Environment, Dean of the graduate School of Environmental Science and Management at the University of California, appointed Co-Chair of UNEP’s International Resource Panel, Anders Wijkman, chairman of the Swedish Association of Recycling Industries, member of the Board of the Swedish Development Authority (SIDA), appointed chair of the Swedish Cross-Party Committee on Environmental Objectives, member of the European Parliament, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Policy Director of UNDP, Secretary General of the Swedish Red Cross and Director General of the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries, Member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, the World Future Council and the International Resource Panel, 2017 (“Come On! Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet – A Report to the Club”, November 11th, Available Online via Subscription to Springer, Accessed 03-20-2018)

1.1 Introduction: The World in Disarray We all know that the world is in crisis. Science tells us that almost half of the top soils on earth have been depleted in the last 150 years1 ; nearly 90% of fish stocks are either overfished or fully fished.2 Climate stability is in real danger (Sects. 1.5 and 3.7); and the earth is now in the sixth mass extinction period in history.3 Perhaps the most accurate account of the ecological situation is the 2012 ‘Imperative to act’,4 launched by all the 18 recipients (till 2012) of the Blue Planet Prize, including Gro Harlem Brundtland, James Hansen, Amory Lovins, James Lovelock and Susan Solomon. Its key message reads, ‘The human ability to do has vastly outstripped the ability to understand. As a result, civilization is faced with a perfect storm of problems, driven by overpopulation, overconsumption by the rich, the use of environmentally malign technologies and gross inequalities’. And further, ‘The rapidly deteriorating biophysical situation is barely recognized by a global society infected by the irrational belief that physical economies can grow forever’. 1.1.1 Different Types of Crisis and a Feeling of Helplessness The crisis is not cyclical but growing. And it is not limited to the nature around us. There are also a social crisis, a political and a cultural crisis, a moral crisis, as well as a crisis of democracy, of ideologies and of the capitalist system. The crisis also consists of deepened poverty in many countries and the loss of jobs for a considerable part of the population worldwide. Billions of people have reached a state of mind where they don’t trust their government anymore.5 Seen from a geographic point of view, symptoms of crisis are found nearly everywhere. The ‘Arab Spring’ was followed by a series of wars and civil wars, serious human rights violations and many millions of refugees. The internal situation is not better in Eritrea, South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen or Honduras. Venezuela and Argentina, once among the richer states of the world, face huge economic challenges, and neighbouring Brazil has gone through many years of recession and political turmoil. Russia and several East European countries are struggling with major economic and political problems in their post-communist phase. Japan finds it difficult to overcome decadelong stagnation, and to deal with the 2011 tsunami and ensuing nuclear disaster. And the temporary economic upswing several African countries have enjoyed lost its dynamism as soon as the prices of mineral resources collapsed, and partly due to very unusual droughts. Land grabbing is plaguing much of Africa, but also other parts of the world, leading to involuntary dislocations of millions of people and the related problems with refugees both within countries and abroad.6 The response of governments has been concentrated, at worst, on managing their own political image, and at best to treat the symptoms of the crisis, not the cause. The problem is that the political class in the whole world is strongly influenced by investors and by powerful private companies. This indicates that the current crisis is also a crisis of global capitalism. Since the 1980s, capitalism has moved from furthering the economic development of countries, regions and the world towards maximizing profits, and then to a large extent profits from speculation. In addition, the capitalism unleashed since 1980 in the Anglo-Saxon world, and since 1990 worldwide, is mainly financial. This trend was supported by excessive deregulation and liberalization of the economy (see Sect. 2.4). The term ‘shareholder value’ popped up in the business pages of the media worldwide, as if that was now the new epiphany and guardrail for all economic action. In reality, it served to narrow business down to short-term gains, often at the expense of social and ecological values. The myth of shareholder value has been effectively debunked in a recent book by Lynn Stout.7 A different, if related, feature of ‘disarray’ is the rise of aggressive, mostly rightwing movements against globalization in OECD countries, often referred to as populism. These have become overt through Brexit and the Trump victory in the United States. As Fareed Zakaria observes, ‘Trump is part of a broad populist

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upsurge running through the Western world. … In most (countries), populism remains an opposition movement, although one that is growing in strength; in others, such as Hungary, it is now the reigning ideology’.8 This phenomenon of right-wing populism can be explained to an extent by the ‘trunk valley of the elephant curve’ (Fig. 1.1) 9 showing the decline of developed world middle classes, during a 20-year period. While more than half of the world’s population was enjoying over 60% income rises, OECD’s middle classes suffered losses caused mainly by the deindustrialization and job losses in major parts of the United States, Britain and other countries. In the United States, the median income increased by a meagre 1.2% since 1979. The stunning income growth on the left-hand side of the curve, the ‘back of the elephant’, lifting some two billion people out of poverty, was caused mainly by China’s and some other countries’ economic success. What remains invisible on the picture is the far end of ‘the trunk of the elephant’: The richest 1% of the world and, more revolting, the richest eight persons of the world now own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world population combined, a figure publicized by Oxfam during the 2017 World Economic Forum.10 The ‘elephant curve’ gives an incomplete picture for a second reason. The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) has proposed a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) going beyond just income and including ten indicators around health, education and living standards. Using that MPI, OPHI counts 1.6 billion people living in ‘multidimensional poverty’ in 2016 – nearly twice as many as the number of people living in extreme poverty measured by income alone.11 Thirdly, the interpretation of the curve requires an analysis of the people in each percentile group. In fact, they tend to move. And the curve does not distinguish those in Russia and East European countries who lost much of their income after 1990 from those in Detroit or middle England who, for very different reasons, also were among the losers.12 Another fact cannot be seen in the picture: the massive shift of money and income from the manufacturing and trade sectors to the financial sector.13 Bruce Bartlett, a senior policy advisor to both the Reagan and Bush administrations, argues that this ‘financialization’ of the economy is the cause of income inequality, falling wages and the poor performance. David Stockman, Reagan’s director of the Office of Management and Budget, agrees, describing our current situation as ‘corrosive financialization that has turned the economy into a giant casino since the 1970s’.14 Populist politicians in the OECD countries see themselves as speaking for the forgotten ‘ordinary’ people and for genuine patriotism, but they tend to fight and antagonize the people representing democratic institutions – what an irony! For the European Union (EU), the strongest trigger for populism has been the millions of refugees who came or would like to come to Europe from the Near East, from Afghanistan and from Africa. Even the most generous European countries have reached their own assumed limits for receiving these masses of refugees. The EU institutions were too weak (not too powerful, as they are depicted by the new nationalists) to deal with the ‘refugee crisis’, resulting eventually in an identity crisis in the EU. Once a success story of an entity ensuring peace and economic development, the EU has lost some of its unifying narrative. The populist right-wing movements or parties see and criticize the EU as the culprit for all kinds of undesired events. The irony is that continuing the success story would require more, not less, powers for the Union. The Union should be entrusted with border protection, a well-funded common asylum and refugee policy to deal with the refugee crisis and maintain the advantages of the Schengen agreement. And for the re-stabilization of the Euro, the EU or at least the Euro zone needs a common fiscal policy, as the new French President Emmanuel Macron is proposing. But it is these very measures of which nationalist populists are most afraid. The EU in its present form is not without shortcomings. Free market principles have come to dominate EU policymaking, leading to a subordination of other policies, like environment. Notably the UK wanted that priority, as it preferred to see the EU chiefly as a union for mutual trade. And the austerity policies pursued have blocked many benign investments and led to unnecessary suffering among tens of millions of Europeans. Such shortcomings, however, should never be used to put in question the overall objectives of the EU – a union of peace, the rule of law, human rights, cultural understanding and sustainability. Addressing the global crisis of democracy, the German Bertelsmann Foundation has published a 3000-page empirical report on progress (or lack thereof) on democracy and a social market economy, as measured by the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI).15 Over the last few years, the report sees a consistent decay of such parameters as civil rights, free and fair elections, freedom of opinion and of press, freedom of assembly and separation of powers. Within the same time frame, the number of countries in which authoritarian, mostly religious, dogmas influence political decision making rose from 22% to 33%. That report was published before the assaults on democracy and civil rights that occurred in summer 2016 in Turkey or the Philippines. Symptoms of tyranny are spreading, including in some of the countries with a solid tradition of freedom and democracy.16 Let us briefly turn to a different kind of crisis. Well, not exactly a crisis but an unpleasant feature in an otherwise fruitful communication tool, the ‘social media’. Aside from being practical and useful for everyday arrangements and exchange of news and reasonable opinions, social media also have become vehicles for enhancing conflicts and vilification of mostly innocent individuals, and for spreading ‘post truth’ nonsense. Much of the contents of social media political conversation is selfenhancing political rubbish, as those media serve as ‘echo chambers’ for networks of like-minded frustrated citizens.17 An empirical study from China found that anger and indignation are the emotions that are most likely to get viral in the social media, meaning they are multiplied faster and stronger than other emotions.18 The Internet and the social media are also vehicles for ‘bots’ (short for robots) that can disrupt or destroy messages, multiply nonsense and create all kinds of mischief. There are dozens of types of malicious bots (and botnets) to harvest email addresses, to grab content of websites and reuse it without permission, to spread viruses and worms, to buy up good seats for entertainment events, to increase views for YouTube videos or to increase traffic counts in order to extract money from advertisers. A more frightening cause of disarray relates to terrorism. In earlier times, humanity’s violent conflicts occurred mostly between different countries. In recent times, systemic and at least partly religious conflicts prevail, using terror attacks with the explicit intention of making people feel insecure. During much of the twentieth century, religions remained quiet, non-aggressive and geographically confined to rather stable territories. This no longer is true. Partly because of globalized populations moving or being forced to leave their home territories, some factions of Islam have expanded geographically and are claiming strong influence over national states, for example, attacking countries like France with its tradition of laicism that does not permit religion to dominate politics. What tends to be underrepresented in the media is the positive role of religions. In Christian-dominated Europe, liberal and tolerant religion became part of the European identity a century after the Enlightenment successfully discredited the earlier doctrinaire, authoritarian and colonialist-missionary manifestations of the faith. During the Cold War, Christian goals of social cohesion helped build the system of ‘Western values’, often described as the social welfare state, or the ‘social market economy’ (for its partial demise, see Sect. 2.4). With a view towards leading Islam into an equally benign and co-operative social role, some Islamic scholars, such as Syrian born Bassam Tibi, call on Muslims in Europe to integrate into democratic society.19 Tibi, however, is not popular among radical Muslims, to put it mildly. But to understand the radicalization of Islam, one must not underestimate the role played by the West, in particular the United States, in interfering with Near Eastern states. Some would say that the troublesome situations mentioned so far, the recurring topics of media headlines, are only the surface of our world’s ‘disarray’. Deeper and more systemic problems include the breath-taking speed of technological development that may very easily run out of control. One trend is digitization that potentially threatens millions of jobs (see Sect. 1.11.4). Another trend or development can be observed in the biological sciences and technologies. The enormous acceleration of genetic engineering through the CRISPR-Cas9 technology20 is causing fears of monster creation or the extinction of species or varieties not seen as valuable under human utilitarian criteria. Generally, a non-specific feeling is spreading that ‘progress’ has scary sides and that the genie may already have left the bottle (see Sect. 1.11.3). No doubt there is a need to analyse and understand the symptoms and roots of the variety of crises, political, economic, social, technological and environmental. It is also important to recognize the extent to which people perceive the various phenomena of disarray and feel disoriented, and to recognize that the reality and the feelings of disarray have a moral and even religious dimension. 1.1.2 Financialization: A Phenomenon of Disarray An important part of the disorientation relates to financial markets. Historians will look back at the last 30 years with concern, when looking at the explosion in bank balance sheets, backed up by declining levels of equity and massive borrowing. One of the results was a temporary private-sector-led boom. The other was a massive increase in the world’s financial sector (finance, insurance, real estate – FIRE), often called financialization, and subsequently the financial crisis of 2008–2009. Excessive risk-taking developed into a crisis that was close to bringing the whole financial system to a halt. When the bubble burst, many governments were forced to step in with broad support programmes. Governments caught by the new mind-set (see Sect. 2.4) were intimately involved in all of this. True, there are many examples of serious malpractices within the private financial sector. But had it not been for the systematic deregulation of the banks by governments, with the purpose of stimulating economic growth by issuing more debt, the situation would have been radically different. The causes behind the crisis were many and varied: – Excessive lending by the banking industry – Lack of action on the part of regulators and central banks to stop (i) excessive lending, (ii) the spread of exotic financial instruments (synthetic assets and bonds, collateralized mortgage obligations/CMOs, structured debt issues, etc.) and (iii) pure speculative transactions – Opaque tax havens, and the absence of a binding legal framework that is accepted and implemented by the international community, in general, and the major jurisdictions and financial centres – Securitization and distribution by investment banks and other financial actors of mortgage-related assets and investment vehicles transferring the credit risk from the original lender to the ultimate bondholders – Failure by some rating agencies and auditing firms to properly assess and report the inherent risks posed by many of the financial products A deeper analysis is presented by economists Anat Admati and Martin Hellwig21 about the main causes behind the financial crisis. Western banks borrowed far too much with far too little equity in their balance sheets to act as a buffer if things went wrong in their business – from trading in the multitrillion-dollar derivatives markets to often reckless lending on real estate. In the decades following the Second World War, banks operated with between 20% and 30% of their liabilities as equity. By 2008, that had shrunk to just 3%. Banks obviously believed that they had invented instruments that removed the risk, allowing them to run their banks with a tenth of the buffer they had before. It proved to be very unrealistic. But they counted with the state to underwrite their risks. Bankers have enriched themselves spectacularly in the process. They made themselves ‘too big to fail’ – and too big to jail. The 2008 financial crisis was mostly caused by that irresponsible greed.22 Yet, in 2009, not only did bankers avoid criminal prosecutions and receive hundreds of billions in government bailouts, but some still paid themselves record bonuses. At the same time, almost nine million households in the United States had to abandon their homes when the value of their houses plummeted and they could no longer service the adjustable-rate mortgages – the so-called foreclosure crisis.23 Financialization refers to the dominance of the financial sector in the global economy and the tendency for accumulated profits (and leverage) to flow into real estate and other speculative investment. Debt is an intrinsic element in this process. In the United States, for example, both household debt and private sector debt more than doubled relative to GDP between 1980 and 2007.24 The same is true for most OECD countries. At the same time, ‘the value of financial assets grew from four times GDP in 1980 to ten times GDP in 2007 and the finance sector’s share of corporate profits grew from about 10% in the early 1980s to almost 40% by 2006’.25 Adair Turner, chair of the UK’s Financial Services Authority in the years following the 2007–2008 crisis, regards unchecked private credit creation as the key system fault that led to that crisis with its devastating consequences.26 From this follows that the financial sector constitutes a significant and increasing risk factor in the economy. The degree of financialization varies from country to country but the increase in the power of finance is general. The current finance sector evolved in the context of the deregulation that gathered pace from the late 1970s and expanded dramatically after the 1999 removal of the separation between commercial and investment banking in the United States.27 This barrier had been put in place in 1933 by the Roosevelt administration in response to the Wall Street Crash of 1929, when a period of rampant credit creation and financial speculation collapsed. Similar speculation preceded the crisis of 2007–2008: The face value of financial products reached US$640 trillion in September 2008, 14 times the GDP of all the countries on earth.28 Lietaer et al.29 compare speculation with ordinary money transfers paying for goods and services: ‘In 2010, the volume of foreign exchange transactions reached $4 trillion per day’, which does not even include derivatives. In comparison, ‘one day’s exports or imports of all goods and services in the world amount to about 2% of those $4 trillion’. Transactions not paying for goods and services, almost by definition are speculative. Such financial products and transactions, the authors continue, lead regularly to monetary crashes, sovereign debt crises and systemic crashes with an average of more than ten countries in crisis every year. One of the consequences of this development is that a significant part of economic growth has been distributed to the wealthy, as mentioned with the new Oxfam figures in the previous subchapter. Practices within the financial sector demonstrate a disregard for the impact they have on both people and the planet. That includes a distinct short-termism, the ratio of banks’ reserves to their loans, the ratio of banks’ lending that support the real economy versus speculation in property and derivatives, unchecked credit creation – in fact money creation – and the failure to account for long-term climate and environmental risks. In the words of Otto Scharmer at MIT,30 ‘We have a system that accumulates oversupply of money in areas that produce high financial and low environmental and social returns, while at the same an undersupply of money in areas that serve important societal investment needs’. The failure to account for environmental risks means that the pressure on already scarce natural resources accelerates – trees are felled, waterways polluted, wetlands drained and the exploitation of oil, gas and coal accelerating, as long as there is demand. It also means that huge savings, among them pension funds, are locked into investments in fossil-based assets. Such assets are increasingly looked upon as high-risk assets (see Sect. 3.4).

#### Revolution is closer than ever – but the masses require a principle of organization.

* Replace with medicine specific stuff – find Wednesday after class.

Basanta ‘20

[Comrade Basanta, polit-bureau member of the CPN-Maoist. 06/14/2020. “On American Crisis — 2,” <https://www.bannedthought.net/Nepal/CPN-Maoist/2020/OnAmericanCrisis-2-Basanta-Eng.pdf>] pat

Nowadays, the United States of America is undergoing a serious crisis. As a consequence of the health crisis brought in by the mishandling of the Covid-19, the unemployment and the economic crisis caused by lockdown, the Black Lives Matter movement created by the white racist supremacy on the part of ruling class, the US now has been trapped in a vicious circle of crisis after crisis. The former defence secretary Collin Powel and the former state secretary of the US James Mattis, who were strong pillars and confidants of Donald Trump, have turned sharp critics due to his mishandling of the on-going movement. President Trump has stopped talking with Dr. Anthony Fauci, the health advisor of the President as their row in the handling of pandemic sharpened. President Donald Trump has now been isolated almost from all quarters. Moreover, the political tussle in the upcoming presidential election is going to divide and polarise the US society further and he seems to get trapped in an awful crisis and further isolation causing insanity. No one can deny that the obstinate president can deploy military to cleanse racial opposition in the name of containing the 'anarchists' and 'terrorists'. The present crisis in the US seems like a wakeup call for a bigger crisis in the days ahead.

I feel to offer a red salute to the declaration of the autonomous region made recently in the Capitol Hill of Seattle, America. However, emotion is not decisive. The autonomous region established within the framework of the reactionary state power provokes the enemy more than it safeguards the liberation of the oppressed people in CHAZ. This kind of tactical move can be supportive if it is made a part of the overall strategy of revolution. The on-going movement seems to be spontaneous, and it does not have any stated destination. Reform in police does not solve the problem the proletariat and the oppressed black people have been confronting in the US. The solution to the on-going crisis in America is scientific socialism guided by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and led by a party of the proletariat. Worth noting is that, the spontaneous movement cannot bring about any revolutionary change in society but it creates a situation from the womb of which a correct ideological and political line and the leadership gestate. The present situation in the US shows that the objective condition is getting favourable for the success of the socialist revolution. But as Che Guevara has said the revolution is not like a mango which automatically falls from the mango tree when it is ripe. What is necessary to develop for the American proletariat at present is the armoury of weapons that help make the revolution a success when they act upon the favourably developing situation.

The first weapon for the success of the socialist revolution in the US is the formation of a genuine Communist Party guided by MLM. And the second weapon is a united front led by the party. In the particular situation of America the strong ideological and political unity mainly between the proletariats of white and black colours along with other oppressed people is a must. The reactionary cultural makeup of the US society based on white racist supremacy has made this task more challenging. The third weapon is the fighting force. All of these weapons are unlikely to get realised in a single attempt now in America. Nevertheless, the sharpening of contradictions in the US society and the objective necessity of revolution to solve them is creating an objective condition to realise it.

In the given situation, the communist revolutionaries in the US have to make a conscious effort to build up an ideologically and politically strong communist party and unite in it several groups and individuals scattered all across the US. Once the political party and its ideological and political line are built up, then the others will come on its way. The revolutionaries have to take up this task sooner than later for the emancipation of the entire oppressed people in America, including the blacks.

#### Thus, vote aff to affirm revolutionary medicine as a reduction in intellectual property protections for medicines.

#### Medicine can and must be revolutionary – voting affirmative aligns with a view of healthcare militantly opposed to capitalist power accumulation in favor of social views of health and broad coalitions among health workers and patients.

Yamada et al ‘20

[Seiji Yamada, MD, MPH; Arcelita Imasa, MD, Gregory Gabriel Maskarinec, PhD, all health professionals (and all committed anti-capitalists). 2020. “Revolutionary Medicine.” <https://www.socialmedicine.info/index.php/socialmedicine/article/view/1075>] pat – gendered language [replaced]

The revolutionary medicine espoused here is grounded in social medicine. As noted by Anderson, Smith, and Sidel, the fundamental precepts of social medicine are that

1. Social and economic conditions profoundly impact health, disease, and the practice of medicine.

2. The health of the population is a matter of social concern.

3. Society should promote health through both individual and social means.

In The Second Sickness, Howard Waitzkin identifies the forerunners of social medicine to be Friedrich Engels, Rudolf Virchow, and Salvador Allende. Social medicine counts among its practitioners Ernesto “Che” Guevara, the Barefoot Doctors of Revolutionary China, and Cuban doctors around the world. The Declaration of Alma Ata, i.e. The Declaration on Primary Health Care of the Joint WHO/UNICEF Conference in Alma-Ata, USSR, 1978, drew on these forerunners as the key to attaining the goal of Health for All by the Year 2000.

Obviously 2000 has come and gone, and we do not yet have Health for All. Unfortunately, we are no longer in a position to hanker for Health for All. Rather, we must focus on the survival of the human species.

Why we need revolutionary medicine now. Climate catastrophe, threat of nuclear war, inequality.

Noam Chomsky (who calls himself a libertarian socialist or an anarchist) points to two existential threats to the survival of the human species: climate catastrophe and the threat of nuclear war. The effects of global warming caused by human activity, the loss of ice, the rise in sea levels, and altered weather patterns with more severe weather events are already evident. Our planet has crossed a tipping point at which the greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere will affect the climate for the remainder of the Anthropocene age. Will it be called the Anthropocene after human civilization has collapsed? The time scale for that collapse draws ever closer, with an Australian think tank predicting that it may occur before 2050.14

The Doomsday Clock, which appears on the cover of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, is currently set at 100 seconds to midnight. While the position of the minute hand takes into account worsening climate security, the clock is largely known for indicating the proximity of the threat of nuclear war. The Bulletin currently cites the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement and the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), the unresolved North Korea situation, and the turn toward high-tech, automated weaponry.15

Another, mediating threat to human survival is severe inequality – among nations and within nations. For having contributed little historically to the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere – many developing states are most vulnerable to climate catastrophe. Sea-level rise poses a threat to the very existence of small island states and low-lying coastal regions. States in the pathway of tropical cyclones are particularly vulnerable. Those who experience racial discrimination, and the poor are particularly vulnerable to severe weather events. They live in inadequate dwellings. Their houses are in low-lying areas which experience more flooding. Large regions of the world also face deteriorating social, political, economic, and environmental conditions due to conflict, pollution, corruption, famine, population displacement. The Anthropocene Age is characterized by catastrophic loss of biodiversity whose global consequences will be disastrous for all species, including our own. Possible unanticipated consequences of synthetic biology and artificial intelligence conjure unimaginable future threats to all humanity.

Globally, health, health care, and health delivery systems are in crisis. Despite major advances throughout the last two centuries extending life-spans, reducing infant mortality, and eliminating smallpox, the promise of improved health and better health care for all people everywhere recedes. Individuals and communities, particularly the poorest and most marginalized in every country, continue to suffer from avoidable infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, HIV, cholera, Zika, dengue, Ebola, and COVID-19, even as antimicrobial resistance increases and vaccination refusal results in a resurgence of preventable childhood diseases; populations everywhere (not just the poorest and least privileged, though they are less likely to receive treatment) have rising rates of chronic noncommunicable diseases, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and obesity. Other threats urgently needing to be addressed include the surveillance state, automation and job loss, imperialism, racism and xenophobia, sexism, LGBTQ exclusion, and reproductive injustice.

Incremental reforms will not be enough to mitigate these existential threats to human survival. It is increasingly evident that we cannot eliminate these threats unless we throw off capitalism as the fundamental basis of our economic and social life. This situation demands of us that we adopt revolutionary thinking and revolutionary practice.

The scientific basis – against reductionism.

The perspective of most who work in medicine is a scientific one. Throughout our primary and secondary education, we become familiar with the scientific world view. The perspective is also a materialist one. An aside: Both Bakunin and Marx wrote extensively about their commitment to materialism and atheism. Of course, there are many people who are deeply religiously committed and who disagree with the philosophically materialist viewpoint. Yet many religious people are anticapitalist and participate in revolutionary action.

In health professional schools, we delve into the basic biological sciences. The perspective of much of Western science is reductive and Cartesian. If a phenomenon can be explained by the more reductionist science (e.g., a biological phenomenon via biochemical mechanisms) – that makes it more scientifically plausible. Physicists are thus wont to see themselves as having a front seat to reality. The underlying assumption is that science is “the paradigmatic human activity, and that natural science discovers truth rather than makes it.”

As Marx noted, however, in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.” For the practitioner of revolutionary medicine, there may be reasons to think not reductively, but rather dialectically, as in Levins and Lewontin’s The Dialectical Biologist. In the most public health of the chapters, “Research needs for Latin community health,” Levins notes

For instance, a man's decision to smoke may increase his risk of heart disease and cancer in the long run, but as one of the few ways he has of coping with stress, it may save the lives of his wife and children. Our assumption of conditional rationality means that we cannot expect to change behavior by education alone: rather, we must alter those circumstances that make such harmful choices seem optimal.

From the reductionist, individualist perspective, we might say in the name of harm reduction, “Go ahead and smoke.” From the revolutionary perspective, we need to work with the [person] man, the woman, their workplaces, and their societies to combat alienation, addictions, and violence against women and children. Revolutionary medicine is the medicine wherein health workers understand the social origins of illness and the need for social change to improve health conditions. It is created from the practice of the people’s struggles against their oppressive conditions. Revolutionary medicine serves the oppressed classes in advancing their struggles.

Proletarianization of health workers.

Writing in the New York Times, Danielle Ofri notes that the increasing complexity of patient care and administrative burdens, including the electronic health record, are accomplished by nurses and doctors who work harder and longer hours. She wonders if this exploitation of health workers is simply the business plan of the corporations that increasingly control the health care system. In Marx’s labor theory of value, difference between the price that a good (in this case, health care) commands in the marketplace - and the cost of producing this good, which is largely labor – is the profit margin, that is the surplus labor that is extracted from the worker. Thus, commodified medicine leads to the proletarianization of health workers. That is to say, they find themselves alienated from their patients, the products of their work (better health for their patients), and their workplace. Consequently, we become alienated from our fellow workers, and ultimately, from ourselves. Health worker alienation from oneself is sometimes described as "burnout," but a more accurate term would be "moral injury." Health as a commodity is unacceptable, not only diminishing the health care of individual patients but causing the entire society to be ill, dis-eased.

We have less and less control over how we work: insurance corporations require adherence to their specific formularies. They pile burdensome prior authorization work on us. They deny treatments we order for our patients. Our employers escalate their documentation demand in a coding arms race with insurance corporations. Granted, nurses and doctors are professionals who command salaries far higher than trades workers or unskilled workers – they are increasingly proletarianized. Nonetheless, we health professionals need to develop class consciousness as a class of workers that is having surplus labor value extracted from us, that is increasingly alienated from the service we perform, and from our own humanity.

Solidarity among health care workers will ensure that health is recognized as a human right, not something to be bought and sold, that surplus labor should not be extracted for profit within the health care profession, but used by the health care workers themselves to ensure healthy lives for themselves and their communities. In the future, electronic algorithms may do much of the diagnosis, treatment, and "curing" of common complaints, allowing health care workers to once more focus on patient-centered "healing," not on electronic charts, billing, and administrative hoops, instead aiming for a healthier population in its widest sense, and at the individual level of the health care team themselves.

For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic. The post-revolutionary health care worker will not be limited to being a neurosurgeon or a nurse anesthetist. She will be a family doc that just has to upload a program. One can imagine a scene taking place in the near future in a remote hospital:

Nurse Neo to family doctor Trinity: Can you fix this subarachnoid hemorrhage?

Dr. Trinity: Not yet. (She speaks into her phone.) Tank, I need a program for the surgical approach to clipping an aneurysm. Hurry. (Her eyelids quiver briefly.) Let’s go.

She will not waste her evenings and weekends remotely accessing her EHR. She might write some science fiction, or she might kick some counter-revolutionary agent butt.

Throughout history, empires have flourished and collapsed without threatening the existence of the entire human population. Epidemics typically (with notable exceptions) had very limited geographic distribution. Neither scenario now fits the world today. We are now global citizens, who need to create cohesive, equitable, socially just societies that address health everywhere, or all of us will face increasing threats to our own health and well-being. Revolutionary medicine is required to create such a society.

#### That commits to a new project of proletarian internationalism which generates global solidarity against the forces of capitalist imperialism.

Viewpoint ‘18

[Viewpoint Magazine aims to understand the struggles that define our conjuncture, critically reconstruct radical history, and reinvent Marxism for our time. Viewpoint is therefore neither a socialist news source nor an academic journal. It is a militant research collective. 02/01/2018. “Internationalism against Imperialism,” <https://viewpointmag.com/2018/02/01/internationalism-against-imperialism/>] pat

The challenge of reactivating an effective proletarian internationalism is made even more urgent by the aggressive rise of right-wing nationalisms, which have taken a range of organizational and ideological guises. The clarified ideological form of this rightward shift is an emboldened “possessive nationalism” in the North, which revolves around restrictive immigration and trade policies, as responses to the perceived erosion of territorial logics of sovereignty, and the hybridization of the ethno-national community. Any prolonged combat against these nativist impulses – especially as they seep into social-democratic or left-liberal parties in Europe and the United States – will need to reinforce the link between migration and imperialism, the former in many ways constituting the reflux of the latter. Here we might center the rich legacy and actuality of migrant struggles for communist politics, and how questions of mobility, control, and dispossession are now at the core of imperialist dynamics. The political and social, informal and formal spaces of migration remain an open field for investigation. As Etienne Balibar noted over 40 years ago, “the concrete knowledge of the causes and effects of immigration is a two-way guiding thread towards an understanding of imperialism,” a methodological linkage which “renders internationalism, more than ever, the very condition of struggles for workers’ liberation.” This raises the practical necessity of reconsidering the tactical repertoire and strategic horizons of anti-imperialism. The nearly two-decades-long “War on Terror” – a euphemism for a war on human welfare in the Middle East and a war against Muslims at home – has proven to be a difficult nub for anti-war and anti-militarist activism in “the belly of the beast,” particularly as U.S. violence, amidst ever-shallower domestic hegemony, takes forms other than that of U.S. boots on the ground. The fading – or destruction – of the anti-war movement after 2005, following massive demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq which featured considerable grassroots mobilization, is a critical episode to reflect upon. The ubiquity of manned and unmanned aerial bombardment, the diffuse and often cloaked nature of counterinsurgency operations, the multiplication of U.S. proxies, and dense financial ties have rendered the military conflicts of U.S. empire, perhaps the most visible manifestation of imperialism, an asymmetrical yet constant presence. Any sustained fight against it must be coordinated around several fronts. Recent experiences of mass protest show that a powerful anti-war movement, if it is to reappear, would do so in an altered shape and in close relation to other insurgent forces in society, an extension of their discursive and strategic reach. The high level of organized resistance to militarized border security and repressive immigration policies, the environmentalist/anti-extractivist campaigns around Standing Rock and elsewhere, and the nascent coalitions and activist milieus that have been fortified through the International Women’s Strike initiatives (resonant with calls from Latin America for a new feminist international) indicate a real potential to build a “popular anti-imperialism” from grounded social struggles, connecting the sites of contestation across neo-colonial and imperial frontiers. One can see how this changes the aims and targets of alter-globalization movements, exemplified in the militancy of summit-hopping demos that directly confront leading economic and financial bodies, or in the parallel institution-building and transnational networking of civil society organizations involved in the World Social Forums. A more adequate approach to questions of coordination and solidarity across borders would have to probe how political organization is tied to material practices of translation, and recognize that even localized concerns often involve the commonalities and divisions of the global labor force. The mutations of class struggle, where the wage-earning proletariat has given way to more diverse social alliances and associations of what Göran Therborn calls the “plebeian strata” or “popular classes,” has provided glimpses of what anti-imperialist mobilization could look like: new strategies of threading upsurges of disruption, combination, and antagonism as they extend over an unstable terrain.

Today, it is necessary to re-situate the concept and question of imperialism. We agree with Lenin when we recognize that no revolution, even a national one, is possible without grasping the effects of imperialism on any local articulation of the working class. And we further agree that, of course, no national revolution would be sufficient for the goal of communism. In short, we see imperialism as both an obstacle to and enemy of internationalism and we in turn view internationalism as a position to be composed in working class struggle itself. Thus, at the risk of simplifying our approach, we propose that to examine imperialism today is to bring it into the realm of class composition. This can involve no disavowal of the complicated history of Marxism and popular struggle with regard to imperialism, nor a simple repetition of any one of its moments. In our sixth issue of Viewpoint, we instead seek out the possibility of an encounter, bringing together historical accounts, artefacts of struggle, and theoretical interventions past and present. Thus we neither “endorse” all of the positions represented here nor reject those that might be absent from this issue, which is a situated engagement with the problem of opposing imperialism from within American empire; we are proud to offer these contributions as material for the long-term work of thinking and struggling against imperialism in the 21st century.

We will not overstate the systematicity of this approach; proceeding in this way entails a roll of the dice. It may involve taking up a history and putting it down again, only to have its importance suddenly strike us when we’ve moved onto a seemingly unrelated study, or when we later discuss a pressing issue at a political meeting. The categories we present here could be presented otherwise, and the various themes and topics that have entered into the current issue are certainly not enough to fill the lacuna of the concept of imperialism demanded by our present. Under- or unrepresented are migration and the struggles that surround it; ecological imperialism and climate debt; the role of China and other states of growing economic weight and political significance; configurations of “super-exploitation,” unequal exchange, and neoliberal labor arbitrage; the changing nature of war – conventional, nuclear, and otherwise; U.S. and E.U. sanctions as a tool of warcraft and statecraft; the role of primary extraction and other environmental threats; the ongoing presence and effects of settler colonialism; and certainly much more. As always, we hope this issue of Viewpoint is only the beginning. If these works can be a foundation for more theoretical and political work, we will be pleased. And if others are compelled to fill in what we and our contributors have had to put aside, even these lacks will have had a purpose.

#### In the face of capitalist hegemony, Marxist thought affirms that, above all, it is right to rebel – truth can only be found in revolutionary practice.

Badiou ‘6

[Alain, French philosopher, formerly chair of Philosophy at the École normale supérieure and founder of the faculty of Philosophy of the Université de Paris VIII. “An Essential Philosophical Thesis: ‘It Is Right to Rebel against the Reactionaries,’” <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/190192>] pat

The sentence, “it is right to rebel against the reactionaries,” bears witness to this more than any other. In it we find expressed the fact that Marxism, prior to being the full-fledged science of social formation, is the distillate of what rebellion demands: that one consider it right, that reason be rendered to it. Marxism is both a taking sides and the systematization of a partisan experience. The existence of a science of social formations bears no interest for the masses unless it reflects and concentrates their real revolutionary movement. Marxism must be conceived as the accumulated wisdom of popular revolutions, the reason they engender, the fixation and detailing of their target. Mao Zedong’s sentence clearly situates rebellion as the originary place of correct ideas, and reactionaries as those whose destruction is legitimated by theory. Mao’s sentence situates Marxist truth within the unity of theory and practice. Marxist truth is that from which rebellion draws its rightness, its reason, to demolish the enemy. It repudiates any equality in the face of truth. In a single movement, which is knowledge in its specific division into description and directive, it judges, pronounces the sentence, and immerses itself in its execution. Rebels possess knowledge, according to their aforementioned essential movement, their power and their duty: to annihilate the reactionaries. Marx’s Capital does not say anything different: the proletarians are right to violently overthrow the capitalists. Marxist truth is not a conciliatory truth. It is, in and of itself, dictatorship and, if need be, terror.

Mao Zedong’s sentence reminds us that, for a Marxist, the link from theory to practice (from reason to rebellion) is an internal condition of theory itself, because truth is a real process, it is rebellion against the reactionaries. There is hardly a truer and more profound statement in Hegel than the following: “The absolute Idea has turned out to be the identity of the theoretical Idea and the practical Idea. Each of these by itself is still one-sided” (Hegel, Science of Logic). For Hegel, absolute truth is the contradictory unity of theory and practice. It is the uninterrupted and divided process of being and the act. Lenin salutes this enthusiastically: “The unity of the theoretical idea (of knowledge) and of practice—this NB—and this unity precisely in the theory of knowledge, for the resulting sum is the “absolute idea” (Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks). Let us read this sentence very carefully, since, remarkably, it divides the word “knowledge” into two. That is a crucial point, on which we shall often return: knowledge, as theory, is (dialectically) opposed to practice. Theory and practice form a unity, that is to say, for the dialectic, a unity of opposites. But this knowledge (theory/)practice contradiction is in turn the very object of the theory of knowledge. In other words, the inner nature of the process of knowledge is constituted by the theory/practice contradiction. Or again, practice, which as such is dialectically opposed to knowledge (to theory), is nevertheless an integral part of knowledge qua process.

In all Marxist texts we encounter this scission, this double occurrence of the word “knowledge,” designating either theory in its dialectical correlation to practice or the overall process of this dialectic, that is, the contradictory movement of these two terms, theory and practice. Consider Mao, “Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?”: “Often, correct knowledge can be arrived at only after many repetitions of the process . . . leading from practice to knowledge and then back to practice. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge, the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge” (Mao Zedong, Five Philosophical Essays). The movement of knowledge is the practice-knowledge-practice trajectory. Here “knowledge” designates one of the terms in the process but equally the process taken as a whole, a process that in turn includes two occurrences of practice, initial and final. To stabilize our vocabulary,2 and remain within the tradition, we will call “theory” the term in the theory/practice contradiction whose overall movement will be the process of “knowledge.” We will say: Knowledge is the dialectical process practice/theory.

On this basis we may expose the reactionary illusion entertained by those who imagine they can circumvent the strategic thesis of the primacy of practice. It is clear that whoever is not within the real revolutionary movement, whoever is not practically internal to the rebellion against the reactionaries, knows nothing, even if he theorizes.

Mao Zedong did indeed affirm that in the theory/practice contradiction— that is, in a phase of the real process—theory could temporarily play the main role: “The creation and advocacy of revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role in those times of which Lenin said, ‘Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement’ ” (Mao, On Contradiction). Does this mean that, at that moment, theory amounts to an intrinsic revolutionary possibility, that pure “Marxist theoreticians” can and must emerge? Absolutely not. It means that, in the theory/practice contradiction that constitutes the process of knowledge, theory is the principal aspect of the contradiction; that the systematization of practical revolutionary experiences is what allows one to advance; that it is useless to continue quantitatively to accumulate these experiences, to repeat them, because what is on the agenda is the qualitative leap, the rational synthesis immediately followed by its application, that is, its verification. But without these experiences, without organized practice (because organization alone allows the centralization of experiences), there is no systematization, no knowledge at all. Without a generalized application there is no testing ground, no verification, no truth. In that case “theory” can only give birth to idealist absurdities.

We thus come back to our starting point: practice is internal to the rational movement of truth. In its opposition to theory, it is part of knowledge. It is this intuition that accounts for Lenin’s enthusiastic reception of the Hegelian conception of the absolute Idea, to the point that he makes Marx into the mere continuation of Hegel. (“Marx, consequently, clearly sides with Hegel in introducing the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge,” Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks.) Mao Zedong’s sentence lends its precision to Lenin’s enthusiasm. It is the general historical content of Hegel’s dialectical statement. It is not just any practice that internally anchors theory, it is the rebellion against the reactionaries. Theory, in turn, does not externally legislate on practice, on rebellion: it incorporates itself in the rebellion by the mediating release of its reason. In this sense, it is true that the sentence says it all, an all that summarizes Marxism’s class position, its concrete revolutionary significance. An all outside which stands anyone who tries to consider Marxism not from the standpoint of rebellion but from that of the break; not from the standpoint of history but from that of the system; not from the standpoint of the primacy of practice but from that of the primacy of theory; not as the concentrated form of the wisdom of the working people but as its a priori condition.

B. The Three Senses of the Word “Reason”

If this sentence says it all, it nevertheless does so according to the dialectic, that is, according to a simplicity that divides itself. What concentrates and sustains this division, while apparently cloaking it, is the word “reason” or “rightness”: one is right, the rebellion is right, a new reason stands up against the reactionaries. The fact is that, through the word “reason,” the sentence says three things, and it is the articulation of the three that makes the whole.

1. It is right to rebel against the reactionaries does not mean in the first place “one must rebel against the reactionaries” but rather “one rebels against the reactionaries”—it is a fact, and this fact is reason. The sentence says: primacy of practice. Rebellion does not wait for its reason, rebellion is what is always already there, for any possible reason whatever. Marxism simply says: rebellion is reason, rebellion is subject. Marxism is the recapitulation of the wisdom of rebellion. Why write Capital, hundreds of pages of scruples and minutiae, of laborious intelligence, volumes of dialectic often at the edges of intelligibility? Because only this measures up to the profound wisdom of rebellion.

The historical density and obstinacy of rebellion precede Marxism, accumulating the conditions and necessity of its appearance, because they instill the conviction that, beyond the particular causes that provoke the proletarian uprising, there exists a profound reason, which cannot be uprooted. Marx’s Capital is the systematization, in terms of general reason, of what is given in the historical summation of causes. The bourgeoisie, which cognizes and recognizes class struggle, is happy to admit and investigate the particular causes of a rebellion, if only in order to forestall its return. But it ignores the reason, which when all is said and done the proletarians hold onto—a reason that no absorption of causes and circumstances would ever satisfy. Marx’s enterprise amounts to reflecting what is given, not so much in the particularity of battles but in the persistence and development of the class energy invested in them. The thinking of causes does not suffice here. The reason for this persistence must be accounted for in depth. The essence of the proletarian position does not reside in the episodes of class struggle but in the historical project that subtends them, a project whose form of practical existence is given by the implacable duration and successive stages of proletarian obstinacy. That is where reason lies. Only its clarification and exposition—simultaneously in the guise of reflections and directives—do justice to the movement, which rebellion brings to light, of the class being of phenomena.

Today only the Maoist enterprise integrally develops what proletarians do and allow us to know through the unconditional and permanent character of their rebellion. Only thus can we say: yes, contradiction is antagonistic, yes, the workers’ rebellion, which is the fire at the heart of this contradiction, is the very reason of history. “It is right to rebel against the reactionaries” means above all: the obstinate proletarians are right, they have all the reasons on their side, and much more besides.

#### You should understand the aff as a project of counter-hegemony – every debate and argument is a testing ground to strengthen the communist movement – voting affirmative is an investment in the war of position.

Carrol ‘6

[William, University of Victoria. 2006. “Hegemony, Counter-hegemony, Anti-hegemony,” <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279801161_Hegemony_Counter-hegemony_Anti-hegemony>] pat

The term counter-hegemony seems misleadingly complementary to hegemony. In actuality, there is an asymmetry between the two, rooted in the different forms of power that are at stake. John Holloway, working within an autonomist framework inspired by Zapatismo, has written of the struggle to liberate power-to from power-over as “the struggle for the reassertion of social flow of doing, against its fragmentation and denial” (2005: 36). So long as power-over is sustained through an effective blending of persuasion and coercion, hegemony remains intact. To distinguish practices that liberate power-to from practices that contribute to the replication of power-over, we must return momentarily to critical realism’s transformational model of social activity. If hegemony is deeply grounded beneath the fray of conjunctural politics, we need to distinguish between activity that merely alters a certain state of affairs without effecting any deeper transformation and activity that is transformative (Joseph, 2002: 214). It is the latter that holds the possibility of liberating power-to from power-over. To invoke Nancy Fraser’s (1995) distinction, remedies for social injustice that merely affirm a group’s status or entitlements within an existing order must be distinguished from remedies that transform the world in ways that abolish underlying generative mechanisms of injustice. Such transformation can only take place through concrete political initiatives. Counterhegemony may portend deep transformation, but it gets its start on, and draws much of its vitality from, the immediate field of the conjunctural, in resistance to the agenda of the dominant hegemony (Hall, 1988). A good deal of counter-hegemonic struggle occurs in direct opposition to the aspects of capitalist hegemony we reviewed earlier – in the rejection of social and semiotic fragmentation, of neoliberal insulation and dispossession, of globalization from above. It is precisely through these oppositional politics that a global justice movement has, since the mid-1990s, taken shape and gained a sense of ethical purpose. As important as the concreteness of conjunctural politics is, counter-hegemony cannot simply remain on the terrain of hegemony, contesting its issues within its discursive frames. It is not enough to “celebrate the fragments” in a politics of difference, if such celebration simply intensifies the problems of postmodern fragmentation; nor can “reclaiming the commons” be a resumé of resistance to neoliberalism. Like the trade-unionism of the fordist era, such politics buy too heavily into hegemonic forms; they seek solutions within the existing hegemony (cf. Russell, 1997; Kebede, 2005). The question is how to relate creatively to the immediate conjuncture while avoiding capture by the hegemonic discourses and practices that inform and organize that conjuncture – how to weld the present to the future, as Gramsci once put it. Historic bloc, war of position If hegemony is deeply grounded then counter-hegemony needs to address those grounds. This stricture points to the articulation of various subaltern and progressive-democratic currents into a counter-hegemonic bloc that effectively organizes dissent across space and time. Historic blocs are all about articulation, but which articulations matter? In Stuart Hall’s (1986: 53) conception, articulation is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? ... The ‘unity’ which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but not necessarily, be connected. From a critical realist perspective the most promising articulations are those that mobilize social forces in ways that challenge the underlying bases for hegemony while building bases for a radical alternative. In opposing an hegemony that fragments the social, that valorizes the anonymous market and possessive individual, that privileges ‘security’ over justice, movements need to rearticulate and transform, to build solidarities, including those spanning South and North. In a Gramscian problematic, a viable counter-hegemony draws together subaltern social forces around an alternative ethico-political conception of the world, constructing a common interest that transcends narrower interests situated in the defensive routines of various groups. Such counter-hegemony “has to adopt the organisational capacity to establish a rival historical bloc to the prevailing hegemony by sustaining a long war of position” (Morton, 2000: 261). In this perspective, historic bloc and war of position are dialectically linked at the organic level, representing respectively the synchronic and diachronic aspects of counter-hegemony (Carroll and Ratner, 2000). A war of position “opens space for new spatio-temporal totalities” (Joseph, 2002: 218); it creates the conditions under which a democratic culture and new social order can thrive. As a radical politic, this approach emphasizes the need for counter-hegemonic movement to walk on both legs, taking up state-centred issues as well as issues resident in national and transnational civil societies. Indeed, reclaiming the state – democratizing state practices in the wake of neoliberal globalization – is elemental to counter-hegemony today (Wainwright, 2003). Within this framework, states are neither privileged nor forsaken as sites of struggle and change, but state-centred politics is understood as one part of broader transformations (Brand, 2005b: 248). Often romanticized as the world’s first post-modern movement, the Zapatistas actually exemplify what walking on two legs might look like in a world dominated by transnational neoliberalism. Their rejection of Leninist and social democratic strategies to take state power directly, their emphasis on the political struggle over the military struggle, their attention to dignity as an ethical principle are all obvious aspects of a creatively conducted war of position. The Zapatista’s “Other Campaign”, launched in 2005, engaged subversively with the electoral process to consolidate the anti-capitalist left. Instead of running candidates, the Other Campaign called for the enactment of a new national constitution that would bar privatization of public resources and other neo-liberal moves, and insure autonomy for Mexico’s 57 distinct indigenous peoples (Ross, 2005). The call for a new constitution is hardly a rejection of state-centred politics; rather, it is a refusal to be co-opted into the game of bourgeois statist politics. With their clever approach to the state and civil society, the Zapatistas provide clues as to how “to conduct politics with reference to the state without moving oneself in state forms and thus actually reproducing existing relationships of domination” (Brand and Hirsch, 2004: 377).

#### The Role of the Judge is to be a propagandist.

#### Studies prove debate is inevitably implicated in the context of propaganda – voting aff aligns with a model predicated on communist base-building.

Greene and Hicks ‘6

[Ronald Greene, former Chair of the Critical and Cultural Studies Division of the National Communication Association, and Darrin Hicks, communication studies at the University of Denver. 2006. “Lost convictions: Debating both sides and the ethical self-fashioning of liberal citizens,” <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09502380500040928>] pat

Concurrently, the Army Information and Education Group, which would become the core of the Hovland-Yale Communication and Persuasion Group, led by Carl Hovland, was conducting experiments testing the relationship between inducement and internalized attitude change. In 1953, Hovland, Janis, and Kelley published their highly influential book Communication and Persuasion, which established a positive relation between verbalization and the intensification of belief and predicted that being forced to overtly defend a position discrepant from one’s own private beliefs would result in the internalization of the overtly defended position. This prediction was further supported by the forced-compliance and cognitive dissonance studies of Festinger (1957) and his colleagues at Stanford. For decades, the ability to understand the merits of opposing arguments had been championed as one of the prime pedagogical benefits of intercollegiate debate training. However, in the fall of 1954, Hovland’s and Festinger’s studies coupled with the anti- Communist rhetoric of Schlesinger, which would, much to Schlesinger’s dismay, come to underwrite McCarthy’s witch hunts, would be articulated in such a way that debate’s ability to train students to take the other’s perspective might be framed as a threat to national security. The fear that defending the diplomatic recognition of ‘Red China’ would turn American youth into Communist sympathizers saturated the debating both sides controversy with an anxiety over the virility of ‘democratic faith’. Those choosing to defend the virtues of intercollegiate debate and the practice of debating both sides were careful not to question the basic tenets of the anti-Communism that constituted the ideological core of Cold War liberalism. Democracy, if it were to survive the seductive appeal of totalitarianism, had to become a fighting faith, a faith born out of and tested in social and political conflict. Debate, in particular the format of debating both sides of controversial issues embodied the sort of political conflict that could engender sound conviction, rational decisions, and a committed youth impervious to Communist propaganda. Moreover, debate provided the antidote to communist propaganda. Baird concluded, ‘[c]ollege debate teams are the last groups in this nation where Communist propaganda has any chance of making headway’ (1955, p. 7). No student wishing to win the debate, Burns argued, ‘would take the affirmative on the grounds that we must love the Chinese or that they are merely agrarian radicals’ (p. 7). Burns, so confident in the anti-Communist sentiment of the majority of students, contended that no student would dare argue in favour of Communism but ‘pitch his [sic ] case on the argument that recognition might help pull China out of the Moscow orbit, that it might help build a firmer anti-Communist alliance, that it might make peaceful coexistence possible. He [sic ] would, in short, be directing our attention to the very questions that all American’s might well be debating’ (p. 7). For Schlesinger, however, the ground of the anti-Communist consensus Baird believed to be evident in ‘the majority of students’ was unstable.

#### Distrust their statistical data- it’s manufactured by corporations with faulty quantitative research incentivized by capitalism

Galloway ‘14

[Alexander, Media, Culture, and Communication at NYU. 2014. “The Cybernetic Hypothesis,” <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2420021>] pat

So to observe that quantitative, rationalistic methods became dominant is not simply to claim that scientific positivism won the battle of wits, having transformed the nature of knowledge production and truth since the early modern period. It is also something else, for the liberal iteration of methodologies (in the plural) is itself a method-effect. The liberal iteration is precisely the only flavor available to anyone subscribing to the cult of scientific positivism in the first place.

What other mode could possibly be as efficient as pure suitability itself, pure individual appropriateness, the raw granularity of every body satiated by its own unique specificity? As with post-Fordism, what results is a field of infinite customization, where each thinker has a method tailored to his or her preferences. Such capacious liberalism takes great pride in the fact that no single methodological authority can ever truly be triumphant, whether that authority be God, jouissance, pragmatic reasonableness, or positivistic verifiability. In other words, even in the face of the seeming liberal fragmentation of the many methodologies, such liberalism nevertheless simultaneously enshrines the law of positivistic efficiency, for what could be more efficient than infinite customization? What better way to wrangle this rainbow coalition than to grant everyone in it the freedom to do what he or she will? Standardize the world and kill the spirit, but empower difference and the individual is unchained. In short, under post-Fordism, liberal ecumenicalism and positivistic efficiency share a special relationship.

For cultural workers, this presents something of a problem. The triumph of quantitative methods seems to devalue and exclude much of what cultural workers do. And the reverse is true as well, since many cultural workers often see little point in positivistic pursuits, regularly writing them off as wrongheaded, soulless, or myopic. Faced with such crises of method, some cultural workers prefer to withdraw into a more rigorous critical practice, not, as their detractors might claim, to cling to some sense of cloistered security granted to the armchair philosopher, but because of the newfound perspective gained from thinking in a way that is asymmetrical to the current state of affairs.

Yet humanists pursuing quantitative research methods face an additional challenge, for today’s corporate titans consist of little more than highly evolved modes of quantitative research. An Internet search company’s page rank algorithm taps into a mass of intellectual labor performed in the field. It supplements this laboring mass with its own intellectual labor, the labor of data extraction, storage, and processing. So in many cases, what used to be intellectual work is now industrial work. When using quantitative methodologies in the academy (spidering, sampling, surveying, parsing, and processing), one must compete broadly with the sorts of media enterprises at work in the contemporary technology sector. A cultural worker who deploys such methods is little more than a lesser Amazon or a lesser Equifax.

A century ago, capital had a monopoly on the physical materiality of production. Now it has a monopoly on the immaterial sphere of informatic commerce. Industry has finally moved into the realm of intellectual labor, and by most reports it is excelling beyond all expectations. Many scholarly researchers must therefore face a startling fact: the corporate sector simply has far superior data reserves at its disposal. Thus, in the information society, the scholar of information will forever be trapped in a deficit of resources, playing catch-up behind the scads of mathematics PhDs on staff at Google. Never before in history have immaterial and informatic assets been so closely intertwined with capital.